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HIGH PRESSURE

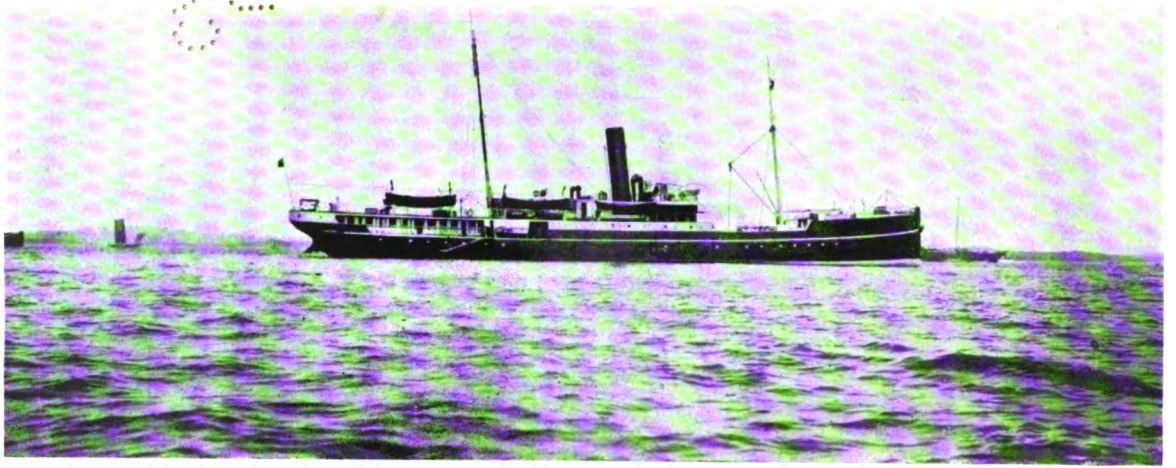
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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

WITH THE CHITRAL RELIEF FORCE
THE INDIAN FRONTIER WAR, 1897
ON THE HEELS OF DE WET
THE YELLOW WAR
A STUDY OF THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR
A SUBALTERN OF HORSE
SIDE TRACKS AND BRIDLE PATHS
WITH THE CONQUERED TURK
THE HISTORY OF KING EDWARD'S HORSE

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THE TIMES DISPATCH BOAT S.S. *HAIMUN*.

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HIGH PRESSURE

BEING SOME RECORD OF ACTIVITIES IN
THE SERVICE OF *THE TIMES* NEWSPAPER

By

Colonel LIONEL JAMES, C.B.E., D.S.O.

Univ. of California

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

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First edition . . . 1929

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Above all things, order, and distribution, and singling out of facts, is the life of dispatch; so as the distribution be not too subtle: for he that doth not divide will never enter well into business; and he that divideth too much will never come out of it clearly. To choose time is to save time; and an unseasonable motive is but beating the air. There be three parts of business: the preparation, the debate or examination, and the perfection. Whereof, if you look for dispatch, let the middle only be the work of many, and the first and last the work of few. The proceeding upon somewhat conceived in writing doth for the most part facilitate dispatch: for though it should be wholly rejected, yet the negative is more pregnant of direction than an indefinite; as ashes are more generative than dust.

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FOREWORD

MOST prefaces savour of an apologia. This is not the present purpose. My foreword is purely explanatory. As from the opening chapter, the narrative will plunge the reader forthwith into an atmosphere of rather exceptional excitements, I feel that it may possibly make this atmosphere more comprehensive if there be some slight description of myself. This view is not prompted by conceit, nor artistry, but by common sense. If you select to travel with a person hitherto unknown to you, it is, if not a great help, at least a satisfaction to know beforehand something about him. Here you are:—

I am the fourth son of an old Bengal Gunner. I was educated at a Public School and went to India when I was seventeen. It was my parents' intention that after a short visit I should return to England with the object of becoming a soldier. Circumstances decided otherwise and I became an indigo planter in Behar. Behar in the late 'eighties and early 'nineties was an ideal place for a young man of sporting proclivities. I was equipped by nature with a ready pen. The life of an indigo planter allows of much leisure and I employed it by writing to the Indian papers. I was sufficiently successful to add very considerably to my income. This enabled me to extend

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my activities into the fields of racing and trading in polo-ponies.

In 1895, when the recital of my journalistic career opens, I had been in India seven years. I had just turned twenty-four, and had been an indigo planter just long enough to realize that I desired a more extended horizon than that to be found in a very pleasant province in Bengal.

How I drifted into a career of professional journalism the text of my story will disclose. I may claim that I became a professional journalist when in 1900 I joined the staff of *The Times* as its special Foreign Correspondent. I remained in the service of *The Times* for thirteen years, when I retired from journalism after having represented this great paper in nearly every quarter of the Globe.

In the Great War I was fortunate enough to command a Cavalry Regiment during the most critical stages of that tremendous struggle.

What I have set down does not profess to be either a history or a digest of the military operations concerned. It is, as my title suggests, just a record of work at "High Pressure" as a journalist. It is a personal affair—no more—no less!

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CHAPTER I

A BAD DELIVERY

"BEATEN, a short head!"

If the fool of a jockey had ridden to his instructions, he would have won, and all would have been well. He threw up his whip too late, and though a length past the post the race was to the outsider, yet at the post the favourite was a short head in front. Thus three months of patient scheming and careful training went by the board. The great *coup* had failed. The stable secret had been well kept: only the clumsy-witted rider, whom Australia had sent to India and called a jockey, had failed. The writer had realized his last rupee to back his pony's chances. In the language of the race-course he was now "broke." It is not much perhaps for a healthy lad of twenty-four to be face to face with a petty bankruptcy. In reality it is a small matter. It is, however, of small matters that our lives are composed. At the time they do not seem small, and the crass stupidity or studied disobedience of this jockey was the irresistible fate that drove the writer into the fascinating paths of modern journalism that he pursued for nineteen years.

For the moment the blow was stunning. It looked as if the seven years spent in India had

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been lived in vain: that the stable must be sold to meet the settlement: that the longed-for visit home to England must be postponed indefinitely: that nothing remained but a return to Behar and another period of isolated labour amid the mental stagnation of planting indigo. Even the bright February sun beating down on to the Allahabad Race-course could not dispel the gloom of that desperate afternoon.

The great idea, however, was "Bob" Ridley's. In those days in Northern India everyone knew "Bob" Ridley of the Manchester Regiment. Cheery, warm-hearted, satirical, he was one of that generation of soldier-sportsmen who gave the country good value a few years later in South Africa.

"Sell your stable, pay up all you can and go to the war!" was Ridley's proposal.

"What war?"

"It's in the paper this morning. They are going to have a Frontier show. They are sending a relief force to Chitral."

"In what way can that help me?" I asked.

"Get some paper to take you as its Correspondent. We could all see that your jockey threw that race away for you. Anyone who could engineer the *coup* you have just missed by a hair's-breadth must have some of the necessary qualities. We all have reason to know that you can write!"

That is how the urgent telegram came to be sent to J. O'B. Saunders, managing proprietor of the Calcutta *Englishman*. The answer came back that night. It ran: "Admirable suggestion.

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Expedition cannot start for a week. Come Calcutta."

There will be many who still retain a tender memory for J. O'B. Saunders of the *Englishman*: his ample proportions: his open-handed hospitality: his cheery bonhomie, and the instinct that led him to capture as much for a penny as his neighbours could secure for three-halfpence. I can hear him now on the momentous morning of my arrival in Calcutta. He was still dressing in his room in Hare Street and he shouted over the screen:

"You will get the medal. It is a great chance for you. I have arranged with *The Times of India* that you duplicate your messages to us both. I hope also to be able to get you *Reuter's* Agency as well. If we get that, it will cheapen everything for everybody. In fact, as I am giving you the chance, you ought to do the *Englishman* for nothing!"

In the inside of that one day in Calcutta it was all arranged, and knowing nothing of the art and craft of the complete War Correspondent the bankrupt indigo planter was transformed by the mutual consent of a news agency and two daily newspapers into the solvent journalist.

With the sketchiest idea of what it all meant, I started at once for Nowshera, the point on the railway where the Frontier Expedition had its rail-head. I wired to my racing partner to "box" to my destination a pony from a batch of green Arabs that we had recently purchased in Bombay. Thus it was that I arrived at the front, nearly 2,000 miles from Calcutta, with one

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change of linen, a pony and saddle, which, with my magnificent inexperience, was my complete equipment. I can now look back upon my start in this adventure with amusement when I call to mind what the Great War Correspondents carried to the front on the first occasion that I met them by the Nile. George Steevens, equipped at the expense of the *Daily Mail* with a larder tinned by Fortnum and Mason, that included everything from turtle soup to plum-pudding: Frank Scudamore, financed by the *Daily News*, with one camel devoted exclusively to laager beer and another carrying an ice-machine and its necessary adjuncts.

It must be admitted that at this period of my career I knew little either of journalism or war. It is true that I had written on many popular subjects to the Indian papers. My literary efforts, however, had been the result of the ennui of a planter's lonely life, and had been chiefly distinguished by that flavour of cynicism which so often is the failing of extreme youth. My knowledge of war was confined to the horizon open to a humble member of a Mounted Volunteer Corps: my familiarity with War Correspondents and their duties was confined to a dim recollection of some magazine articles in which Frederic Villiers or Melton Prior were portrayed as picturesque heroes. Of the responsibilities of this exacting calling into which I had thus unexpectedly drifted I had not the faintest conception. The authority I carried in my pocket only appealed to me as a warrant with which to disport myself in a novel and exciting manner. In this spirit I took up my mantle.

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Nowshera in those days was a small military frontier settlement. There was nothing to shelter the civilian waif except the squalid waiting-room at the railway station. The train, late at night, shot me and my servant into these inhospitable surroundings. Providentially an enterprising Goa boy had seen profit in fitting out the railway waiting-room with a buffet. Otherwise there would have been nothing for the unofficial white man but the bazaar. As it was, I slept on the floor of the general waiting-room, and found on the morrow that my companions in discomfort had been the telegraphist staff of Army Headquarters. I was sufficiently cosmopolitan to share and share alike with them. They were good fellows these soldier signallers, and quite unconsciously I was to learn through my intercourse with them one of the many lessons which were to be guiding lights in the years to come. But of this presently.

In the morning I started out to "learn the language" of my new profession. Army Headquarters in Calcutta had armed me with a permit, upon the back of which, amongst other regulations, was a printed statement to the effect that a Staff Officer would between certain hours daily furnish such items of news as, in the opinion of the General Officer Commanding, it was desirable to make public. Armed with this document and the verbal assurance given by J. O'B. Saunders, that I would be a *persona grata* at Headquarters, I set out, in confident spirit, to find the Field Force Headquarters. I found that General Sir Robert Low, who was the Commander-in-Chief,

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was established in a small Public Works Department bungalow near the Cantonment.

There are many things that a Correspondent at the Front must learn early in his career, if he is to make a success of this precarious branch of journalism. The first of these is that the light-lipped promises of assistance made by a soldier in the piping times of peace are slow to materialize under the stress of war. Also he must realize that the promise of official information in the Regulations is but a printed *façon de parler*. He must depend upon himself and his own individual efforts absolutely for any service of news that is to be of value to his employers. My first visit to Headquarters was a most depressing incident.

Although Nowshera was the rail-head for the Field Force, the actual point of concentration was Hoti Mardan, 10 miles nearer to the massif of the Malakand Mountains into which the Expedition was to penetrate if it were to relieve the little British garrison beleaguered by wild tribesmen in Chitral eight to ten marches farther North.

Hoti Mardan is one of the prettiest little stations in India. It is the permanent post of the Queen's Own Corps of Guides, and a succession of artistic minds that have spent the best part of their lives here have turned the Frontier Cantonment into a cluster of picturesque homesteads. Care and irrigation have raised, in place of the dry surfaces of the Punjab, lawns and flower gardens and turfed polo grounds, so that Hoti Mardan is a veritable oasis in a desert of shale.

At Hoti Mardan I found the Press Censor. In

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a long experience of Press Censors, good, bad and indifferent, I have no hesitation in saying that this was the most difficult Curator of the Press that ever crossed my path. Captain Nixon, who was destined as Sir John Nixon to meet his Nemesis in the disasters of Kut and the Tigris, was then a junior officer of the Bengal Cavalry. He was pleasant enough in his manner, but his method of dealing with Press messages was a *non possumus* attitude. He would put the messages in his pocket, and return them a couple of days later with the laconic annotation that to send them was against the interests of the Service.

Although this is anticipation, yet it will be as well to finish the story here. I was not, at this period, a professional journalist: I was not even attracted by the literary side of the work I had undertaken. Consequently I did not suffer agonies of suppressed indignation when my messages were returned. I considered that having written and presented the messages I had completed my duties: the idiosyncrasies of the Press Censor were not my concern. When, however, a little later I received plaintive appeals from *Reuter's* Agency asking if I were ill, and pointing out that the Central News Agency was publishing full and interesting telegrams from the Front, I tried to find out who my successful rival might be. Here my early hospitality to the Headquarters telegraphists stood me in good stead.

"Why, it is that there Captain Nixon of the Staff!"

This was the limit. Even the phlegm of the amateur journalist rose at this. The Press Censor

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himself the rival. If not Gilbertian, such an arrangement was indeed worthy of the Balkan States.

But these are all preliminary matters and of no great importance. Now to my first battle. As I have lived to command troops in battle in the Greatest War in history, my first introduction to the most poignant excitement that comes to man is a memory to me of singular interest.

The Malakand Pass, strongly held by well-armed and fanatical tribesmen, was to be forced.

At daybreak I was at Headquarters, where Sir Robert Low and his staff were having an alfresco breakfast. I was invited to participate, and was grateful for a mess of omelette and *chaupattie*.

Everyone seemed in the best of spirits. I was struck with the somewhat forced gaiety of all. The plans were laid. Already the brigade detailed to attack was marching down into position with the bagpipes of the 4th Sikhs playing an inspiriting slogan. There was no secrecy now, nor stratagem. Sir Robert Low was going to drive in and over the passes by sheer strength whether there were opposition or not.

The attacking Brigade was commanded by General Waterfield, a dour, taciturn Frontier officer, whose bushy long beard had earned for him the sobriquet of *Lal balu* (Red Bear). I rode forward with Waterfield's staff. The tribesmen were ensconced upon the left of the Malakand Valley. They occupied the summit of a lofty ridge, which for 4 miles flanked this enclave. It was over the steep, rugged face of this mass that the goat-path, that was termed the pass, struggled.

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The Swatis had entrenched the summit of the ridge with stone breastworks behind which their riflemen crouched to dispute the violation of Swat's virgin soil.[1] The main strength of their positions, however, lay in the steep and rugged *glacis* the hill-sides presented, which, bouldered and bush-covered, sweep steeply down to the plain for two to three thousand feet.

As the main body, screened by the Guides' Cavalry, marched into the more narrow terrain, the tribesmen opened the ball by taking sighting shots at the advance guard. This pastime becoming infectious soon included the main column in the target. Waterfield then selected a knoll from which to con the attack. Here I received my baptism of fire. As the General and his staff were sweeping the enemy's defences with their glasses, I stood beside a dignified and much decorated Native Officer who was attached to Brigade Headquarters. From time to time there was a "burr" in the air. As the Mountain Artillery was already in action, covering a flanking movement by the Guides and Sikhs, my impression was that these sounds were caused by large insects disturbed by the unwonted tumult.

"What are those?" I said in Hindustani to the Native Officer.

"Those, Sahib, are the enemy's bullets" (*Dushman ke goli hai, Sahib*), came the amused reply, and the smile broadened to a grin, when my companion saw the surprise and intuitive alarm pictured on my face.

[1] No white man had penetrated into the Swat Valley since the days of Alexander the Great.

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These were the days of the Martini and Snider. Their bullets in flight make a more important noise than do those of the modern small-bore. During the first few seconds of consciousness of their portent, I had to keep subdued the agitation produced at my first realization of mortal danger. No man ever becomes used to being a target to rifle fire: but habit of self-control is rapidly acquired in circumstances where it would be disgraceful to exhibit fear.

The Brigadier gave the order for the King's Own Scottish Borderers and the Gordons to assault the main position. Handing my pony over to my groom, I joined the former battalion. From the moment that the leading company pushed in amongst the scrub-hidden boulders all else remains a blur. Memory serves men badly when enthusiastic excitement holds the mind. The ascent was precipitous and the heat of the sun prodigious, yet no recollection of exhaustion remains. For half an hour all that I can recall was a medley of toiling sweating men. Dead ground prevented all view ahead, while the only sounds that separated themselves from the clatter of hundreds of climbing feet was the overhead whine of the supporting shell. The men were quaintly silent, while the ribald and nervous jests of the few died down as the stress of the ascent told on all.

At last something was seen above. Officers shouted orders, and the men flattened themselves among the boulders. The air began to sing horribly with the whirring song of the Pathan bullets. The slugs hit the boulders with a smack like the detonation of fog-signals. Where the

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advance had been steady it now became broken, and officers collected men and rushed them from boulder to boulder, ledge to ledge. Now and again there was a sickening thud, as some rough-cast bullet found a human billet. One saw the men fall: noticed some prominent or unimportant feature upon the prostrate forms: a mess tin or patched shoe.

The impulse was always forward, until suddenly an officer ruled all men in the vicinity to halt and hold their fire. He was a middle-aged man, short and squat of figure, and, save for his blazing eyes, cool and collected. While exposing himself recklessly, he enjoined all men to hold their fire. There were thin treble shrieks ahead and from the first breastwork a stream of men in flowing robes burst forth. The Lee-Metfords spat all round, and the charging swordsmen collapsed forward in little heaps. Then it was up and onwards again. Men were shouting: bayonets were gleaming. A youthful officer turned and in terrifying language accused his men of having bayoneted him. He dropped almost immediately from loss of blood. He had been shot in the groin. The enemy were streaming out of their barricades and tearing up the hill. Shells were bursting over them. The last hundred feet of the ascent was five minutes of reckless delirium; thus, panting and tugging, the top of the pass was won.

This is not a history of the Chitral Campaign: it is but the front leaf in my own story. If I had known my business, I should never have participated in the excitement of that splendid

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half-hour when the ridge was won: I should have waited below and watched the assault through glasses and then hied away to the nearest telegraph office. No thought of the offices waiting for the news ever entered my head.

The Bedfords and the Dogras had been ordered up on the right of the main assault, and having found a better path were away into the Swat Valley in pursuit. Inebriated with the joyous excitement of it all, I was away with them. It was four in the afternoon before I made my way back to the top of the Malakand. Here all was confusion. An order from Headquarters had come up that Waterfield's Brigade was to descend into the plain again, while Kinloch's Brigade was sent forward, to carry on the pursuit. With the greatest difficulty the Transport of Waterfield's Brigade had struggled up the pass in rear of its successful infantry. It was now ordered down again. So execrable was the Staff work that the descending brigade with its transport met the ascending brigade with its transport on the face of that rugged, pathless hill-side. None who participated in the hideous chaos of that nightfall will forget the scene. The confusion became so inextricable that the moiety of both brigades spent the night on the cheerless frontage of the cliff. The plight of the wounded was pitiable in the extreme, as it was impossible to move the stretchers in the dark, and the poor sufferers lay unattended amongst the heels of the jambed transport mules and the cold comfort of the night-long chatter of the coolies.

When I reached the top of the pass, I found

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that my pony had come up with the animals of Waterfield's Staff. I started to lead it down the hill-side. The track which represented the pass was not to be thought of. It was blocked as tightly as a cattle run in a Chicago stockyard. I knew that a sure-footed horse should be able to descend unridden wherever a man could keep his foothold. The Gordons were descending the almost sheer spur up which they had toiled in the morning. I joined them. The labour entailed in leading the pony down that hill-side will live with me always as a hideous nightmare. The pony was staunch and willing enough, but he was set almost the impossible. In fact, at one place, the Brigadier, not in the best of tempers, who was passing, ordered the pony to be destroyed, maintaining if it fell that it would endanger the men on the hill-side beneath it. It was only by enlisting the help of four cheery Highlanders that the pony was saved. Two of them passing their rifles to their comrades held on to the Arab's tail, while he putting his four feet together slid down the glacier-like descents. Little did those who in later days won money at this pony's successes on many race-courses in India, realize how near he came to destruction on the cliff-side of Malakand.

After the campaign the pony was entered for the Lahore Races in the name of *Chip*. He won two steeplechases and showed such form that he was bought at a high figure by a very clever up-country stable. These owners again sold him at an astounding figure, and his greatest performance was running second in the Army Cup at

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Lucknow, after having got away, to a false start, and completed the whole course before the race actually began. Subsequently the pony broke down after a short racing career in which he had covered himself with glory.

It was pitch-dark before I extricated myself and my pony from the mixed masses upon the hill-side, and stumbled upon the bivouac of the 4th Gurkhas, which regiment was my temporary home. A scratch meal was just being dished up, and as I sat down to it I realized that total exhaustion but expressed inadequately my condition. Up to this, excitement had subdued all physical stresses. Someone in the bivouac suggested that I should now write a description of the fighting: that my business was to ride back to Dargai to the telegraph office. The reply was the pathetic sight of the Correspondent rolled over and in a dead sleep at his place by the tarpaulin that served as the alfresco tablecloth.

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CHAPTER II

APPRENTICESHIP

WE remained in the Swat Valley for some days after the Malakand was forced. At this distance of time the reasons for this inaction do not matter. It, however, enabled me to visualize my shortcomings as a War Correspondent. As far as the Malakand was concerned I had failed miserably.

Reuter's Agency from London demanded by cable the reason of my silence. J. O'B. Saunders could ill disguise his disappointment and annoyance in the sarcastic messages which inquired if I were wounded or ill. It cannot be said that as the recipient of all this anxious inquiry and obliquy I was unduly unnerved. It, however, made some impression upon me, and this initial failure had its place in the lessons of my first indenture. It must be remembered, however, that I had started this campaign with but the foggiest conception of the relative value of News.

This appreciation of News values, as I hope my story will disclose, coupled with tireless energy, is the genius of the successful Correspondent. How few among the new entry possess this genius, only newspaper editors and managers can say. *Reuter's* gave me my first important instruction in these relative values. During the halt in the Swat

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River I received the following curt message from London: "Increase the detail of the fighting: give fullest detail of all disasters." From this I realized that morbidity and journalistic finance march hand in hand.

There was little of interest in the Swat Valley until the Field Force undertook the passage of the Swat River. The river is a rapid and shallow torrent. The flow is so fast that the bed is a mass of rounded pebbles. The water is cold, clear and sweet. In front of the villages of Chakdhara and Adamdarai the river breaks temporarily into five channels. As the enemy were holding these villages in considerable force, it was opined that these reaches were fordable. Colonel Scott, commanding the 11th Bengal Lancers, was ordered to ascertain if the surmise were correct. I look upon the passage of the Swat as one of the most memorable days in my career. I crossed the river with my little pony wedged in between the big horses of two sowars of the leading troop of the 11th Bengal Lancers. If it had not been for the support thus given, the pony must have been washed off its feet, and the current was so rapid that any animal that lost its foothold could only recover it by a miracle.

The subaltern leading the troop was washed away and came within an inch of being irretrievably lost. The enemy kept up a well-nourished fire on the cavalry as it scrambled through the torrents: but the moment they saw that the leading squadron was across, they turned and fled. Just a few, fanatics of a desperate brand, stood in their tracks to fire point-blank in the troopers'

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faces. It was a wild two minutes. The fanatics were overridden to be duly transferred to Paradise by the lances of the succeeding ranks. The enemy were streaming away through the green cornfields in the direction of Uch. The sowars opened out, and there was much killing. Here and there a grey form would rise out of the green and give a shot with frenzied aim: a moment later he was transfixed to the earth. Mounted men were seen flying in the distance.

The squadron-leader rallied his men out of the cornfields and was away in hot pursuit while the squadrons behind completed the *abattoir* business amid the standing corn. My little pony catching the excitement of the mêlée, tore along with the leading squadron. Pathan horsemen were making for the hills to the left of the Uch Plain: the big horses of the Lancers quickly overhauled them. Some threw themselves from their mounts and ran like hares up the hill-sides, others dived into fresh cornfields. I had nothing in my hand but a heavy cane. In the excitement I forgot that I was unarmed and I singled out a man on a dun pony and rode after him. The dun came down in a watercourse, and the Pathan jumping clear started to run. Clearing the watercourse I continued to pursue. The Pathan stopped, and drew from within the folds of his clothes a great bell-mouthed horse pistol. This he presented at me, and as I came up I saw the flint-lock snap. Mercifully the priming had shaken out and it missed fire. At that moment Roddy Owen [1] dashed up

[1] The late Major Roddy Owen, D.S.O., acting as Correspondent for the *Pioneer*, Allahabad.

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and bore the Pathan to the ground. Armed with his infantry sword, Roddy Owen had considerable difficulty in dispatching him. His voluminous clothes seemed steel proof. A sowar, who now appeared, put an end to the difficulty by giving the fallen man the coup de grâce with his lance. It was found that the horse pistol was of English manufacture, and carried the date 1660; it was loaded to the full capacity of its bell mouth with chopped telegraph wire. As a trophy it belonged to Roddy Owen, as he had drawn first blood.

It is a matter of ancient history that Sir Robert Low's force did not relieve the Chitral garrison. Colonel Kelly's column operating from Gilgit raised the siege. I however accompanied Low's force across the Lowari Pass, in those days a desperate military operation necessitating a climb and descent of 11,000 feet. I sat on the snow summit of the pass with Captain W. Robertson, of the 3rd Dragoon Guards, who was an Intelligence Officer with the Force. We ate chocolates and biscuits together as we watched the curious scene of the army in its travail beneath us.

The snow on the pass itself was knee-deep, and any depth in the drifts. The passage of the advance guard had flattened a one-foot path. The ascent to begin with was a gentle incline and the going fairly good. After about a mile of this incline the first unsound patch was reached. Here the baggage animals became a difficulty. When the south ascent-proper of the pass was reached the foothold improved. The prospect was magnificent: above, a deep blue sky; below, one sheet of spotless white gently sloping upwards to the

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broken edge of the sky-line. To right and left the white was relieved by the snow-wrapped *deodars*, their stems standing out against the background, while at intervals, where some outcrop spur gave shelter from the north, grew clumps of mountain ash.

Serpentining upwards along the rolling carpet of snow, right up to the point where it terminated abruptly in a horizon formed by the gorgeous indigo of the sky, could be traced for three miles at least a thin black line of struggling humanity. This was the brigade and baggage toiling to the summit of the pass. Already a stratum of the snow was melting and in places bridges of ice were crossed, with torrents of almost freezing water roaring underneath. Slowly the line crept upwards, the mules stumbling and slipping, the *drabis* stamping and chafing, to keep their circulation free.

At last the summit of the pass was reached. The giant mountains of Chitral stretched away to the north, wooded and black, save where the snowdrifts still held them in their grip. The south ascent of the pass had been comparatively easy. The descent was steep and difficult. It had the appearance of one sheer snowdrift linking up two grisly spurs. Down into this seeming abyss the brigade dropped. The path was but steps of trodden ice. The animals, loosed from their coupling chains, slid or fell for many feet. The little Gurkhas, not caring for the toil of the step-way and reckless of the treachery of the drifts, sat down, and paddling with their heels, tobogganed for stretches of forty to fifty yards.

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The actual descent in snow was three or four miles. Then began another labour, which, if not as cold, was even more difficult. The path became an almost sheer drop down the face of a great spur leading into as majestic a valley as can be found in the length and breadth of the Himalayas. This valley was densely wooded with magnificent forests of *deodar*, Indian oak and fir. Here headway was difficult and often perilous, as the drainage from the melting snow above, and the passage of the leading units, had, in places, churned the virgin soil of the forest into a knee-deep slough, more difficult to the animals than double its depth in snow. Thus the animals struggled down, but many slipped, and with their loads, rolled headlong into the valley below. Yet this was the road by which, men say, Alexander of Macedon invaded India.

Little did I think, as Robertson and I watched this engrossing panorama, that the rather gruff, curt soldier beside me was destined to become a Field Marshal and Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

The Lowari Pass was behind us. That night some of us were in Chitral. The object of the Relief Force had been accomplished. With the new journalistic instinct that had been forced upon me I felt that I should not trust to the poverty of the field telegraph, but must hie me back to the Base. In which decision, my newly acquired enthusiasm went within an ace of putting a definite period to my usefulness as a Correspondent. The rearward communications were open: but were not guaranteed as safe for un-

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escorted travel. In my solitary ride down, I selected a short cut to avoid the windings of the Panj Kora River. Suddenly, as I followed the dry bed of a *nullah* I found myself face to face with a small group of armed Pathans, who were seated on the overhanging lip of the watercourse. The surprise was mutual, and feeling that to stop and turn would be more dangerous than to run the gauntlet, I drove in my spurs. As the pony bounded forward the Pathans fired. As only two of the tribesmen fired second shots, it is to be presumed that only two had breech-loading weapons. It was a near call, the range had been so close that specks of powder burned my neck and cheek.

I returned to India and peaceful pursuits to find that the clouds which had dimmed my financial horizon had cleared. Our racing stable had produced an unexpected prodigy whose first win had completely re-established our credit. Moreover my three months in the mountains had been clear profit. Nature had equipped me with a useful pencil, and, apart from my newspaper connection, a steady stream of handsome cheques came fluttering in from the *Graphic*. My initial failure at the Malakand had been forgiven, if not forgotten, and J. O'B. Saunders received me in Calcutta with open arms. To back his appreciation of my subsequent atonement, he offered me a permanent employment. My first experience of journalism, however, had not sufficiently fired my ambition to look upon it as a serious means of livelihood. I had thoroughly enjoyed three months free-lancing with an Army in the Field. It had been a pleasant

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and, at times, an exciting experience. If it had accomplished anything, it had discovered in me a latent instinct for soldiering, and I now turned with avidity to a study of military history.

After the promised visit to England, I returned in due course to the race-course and the plough. I found that India was quite a profitable field for miscellaneous pen work.

It was possible to combine planting, racing and journalism, and from time to time I undertook short special missions for the *Englishman* and other Indian papers. One of these missions produced such an extravagant situation that it is worthy of record. I found myself in the centre of a Native Agrarian movement. A body of influential and progressive landowners were met in desperate protest against some Government Survey measure. They were most anxious that I should give publicity to their point of view in their own particular form. With refreshing *naïveté* they made it clear to me that they were prepared to reward me handsomely for my good offices in this respect. It was the cold weather and I was living in camp at the time.

When the addresses of the native emissary who brought money-bags were refused, those interested in the controversy sought to undermine my integrity in a more subtle manner. A big landowner put his carriage and spanking pair of Waler horses at my disposal during the important day when the final resolutions were made. In my innocence I thought there was no harm in accepting this convenience in transport. A carriage and pair it seemed to me would add at least dignity and

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perhaps lustre to my "button," as the Chinese say. My surprise, however, was great when, at the end of the day, I would have dismissed the carriage and its liveried coachman with a douceur, the latter subserviently asked me where he was to stable my horses. He refused to take them home to their rightful owner, assuring me that they were mine and had been presented to me as a gift. Finally he was induced to depart. In the morning, however, when I looked out of my tent, I saw the carriage standing in the road, and the pair tied up alongside my own horse in the shade of the mango-tope. As far as I know to the contrary the skeletons of two exceedingly aged horses are lying there to this day.

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CHAPTER III

IMPROVED SERVICE

IT was not until 1897 that wars and the rumours of wars again brought their disquieting influence into my life. I was spending a portion of the hot weather in Simla, when the first signs of the great conflagration on the North-West Frontier of India appeared. The Arabs of Egypt and the Soudan have a saying that those who have once tasted the sweet waters of the Nile will always return to drink them again. So with the man who has once smelt powder burned in anger. I went straight away to Hensman of the *Pioneer*. Hensman, in those days, was the wise man amongst India's journalists. He was a mysterious appendage to the Government of India. He migrated with the Government biannually and possessed that supreme journalistic faculty, of extracting information without apparent effort from Pooh-bah Sphinxes. He had a fine head for whist, and in its season Bridge. With him the card table was his potential stock-in-trade. If you play an intimate game of chance consistently with three Members of Council, it is your own fault if you do not assimilate something of the atmosphere of the public affairs over which they are ruminating.

Be this as it may, Hensman was one of the

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great journalists of his day, and he seemed anxious that the *Pioneer* should employ me on the Frontier. He gave me a letter of recommendation to Chesney, the then Editor of that great Indian journal.

Confident that Chesney would be as enthusiastic of the suggestion as was his deputy, I made the journey in the midsummer heat to Allahabad. The Editor of the *Pioneer*, who was suffering from the ills bred of a sedentary life in that desperate climate, was not inclined to accept me either at my own or at Hensman's valuation. I had written for the *Pioneer* in a desultory manner on agriculture and horses, and was, therefore, not altogether a stranger. Chesney went straight to the point.

"Go back to the plough!" he said. "There is no future in journalism for you. If you take to it, you can never aspire to gain one of the few plums, and in any case you will have a life of drudgery before you. If I send a Correspondent to this Frontier affair, I shall requisition some soldier. Soldiers are better informed and far cheaper than you would be!"

Doubtless there was much truth in Chesney's plain speaking. But his curt dismissal of my offer made a deep and somewhat bitter impression on me. It had touched me to the quick. And if any given circumstance made me a serious journalist, it was the underlying suggestion in Chesney's estimate that I was "underproof." Of such is human vanity.

On my return from Allahabad I found awaiting me an urgent telegram from *Reuter's* Agent in

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Bombay, with the earnest request that I should again represent that great News Agency at the Front that was about to develop upon the North-West Frontier of India. I accepted the offer out of hand, and within twenty-four hours started for Peshawar. The two papers I had previously represented this time fell into line with my terms, and I made my way to the Front fully determined upon one matter, and that was to show the editor of the *Pioneer* that his principle of economy was false, and that the cheap soldier expert is 99 times out of 100 a failure as a journalist in the field.

It was early in September, 1897, when I arrived at Peshawar. A general mobilization was taking place all along the Frontier.

It is not my intention to burden the reader with the detail of these Frontier Wars, fascinating studies though they were to me at the time. There is no pretension on my part to give even an outline of military history. The campaigns at which I have been are for the purposes of my narrative, only the vehicles by which it has been possible for me, as a journalist, to make certain deliveries to my employers. Incidentally, I have come in contact with many persons and circumstances that are usually denied to ordinary people. It is these associations and events that I would pass in review, making the chronology as little tedious and pedantic as possible.

My first essay in 1897 was with the Mohmand Field Force. I joined it at Shabkadr. My novitiate two years before had served me well.

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In the figurative language of the camp, I now "knew my way about." I had learned that it was easier to jettison equipment on a campaign than to acquire it. I had formed definite ideas as to transport. I had no intention of passing my nights habitually in unnecessary discomfort beneath a frayed tarpaulin sheet. On arrival at the base I at once sought out and made friends with a liberal-minded Transport Officer, who, by virtue of the authority of my Press pass, gave me a string of three mules with a muleteer complete, making the condition that I would share them with any two other Correspondents who might arrive armed with a similar authority. "I am off to Khusalghar to-morrow," he said with a smile. "So I fancy you will be somewhere in the Pamirs before the Department realizes that you are two mules surplus. They are good mules, so mind that you get a receipt for them, when you hand them in at the end of the Show." They were in truth good mules, and they served me, and "the two hypothetical Correspondents" well and faithfully for six months.

I attached myself to General Westmacott's Brigade. There will be many who still will hold in affectionate memory the figure of this gallant little man, outrageously dressed in the coat of horse blanketing, and box-cloth gaiters that he loved to affect in defiance of all dress regulations for officers on Service. The dogged spirit that pervaded him can be judged from the fact that his left arm had been rendered practically useless by a wounded panther, and

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that his ambition in middle life was to walk up, and destroy a *centaine* of tiger and panther in settlement against this injury. When I knew him his "bag" was into the seventies.

As I had no rival in the Field during the operations against the Mohmands, I could afford to allow myself some latitude in my work. General Westmacott employed me on his Staff to carry messages. I was out to learn the business of a soldier, and I was grateful for every opportunity that came my way. Incidentally this employment as a volunteer galloper brought me my first independent command in action. It came about in this manner.

The tribesmen had collected in some force to dispute the passage of the Bedmanai Pass. Westmacott sent the 20th Punjab Infantry forward to attack. He soon saw that the mass of hills commanding the pass were more than one battalion—even though this was the 20th—could manage. The Gurkhas, therefore, were deployed to clear the higher hills on the left of the pass. The first crest was taken by the 20th. It was then seen there were several succeeding crests. On the right, a rib of the next position led down to a knoll where a particularly venomous group of sharp-shooters had established themselves in a small *ziarat* and could enfilade the main advance.

Westmacott sent me down to a knoll where the Maxim detachment of the Devonshire Regiment, escorted by half the Afridi Company of the 20th, was supporting the right advance, with instructions that the marksmen in the

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ziarat must be turned out. Logan, who commanded the Maxim, could not speak Hindustani, and as there was no British officer with the 20th, asked me to take them along to attack the *ziarat* while he covered us with his Maxims. This was quite to my taste. I translated Logan's orders to the havildar (sergeant) who commanded the escort, and following me the party crept along a watercourse to discover a way to negotiate the intervening 800 yards with as little exposure as possible. There were three lesser spurs between Logan's position and the *ziarat*. We occupied these by successive rushes.

The story of this little incident is told in a contemporary description of the engagement as follows: "A party of forty of the enemy ensconced themselves in a *ziarat* and declared defiance by beat of drum and a well-sustained fire. A detachment of the Afridi Company of the 20th worked up to them, in spite of the Martini fire by which they were received, and collecting under a pathway rushed the position with the greatest pluck. The enemy, drums, standards and all, had not the *morale* to stand, and fled precipitately down into the villages below and streamed across the plain, where Lieutenant Logan dispersed them with fire from his Maxim, which he had forced up an almost impracticable roadway."

Logan had sent a signaller with me to enable me to report any further target when we had occupied the *ziarat*. This man was a Sikh belonging to another company of the 20th. He lay beside me when the little detachment

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was preparing for the final rush. As we lay he whispered in my ear: "Sahib, these men are all Afridis, so I must stick by you. You never know what may happen, when these fellows are fighting against their own brothers!"

This incident is not given to suggest that there was any foundation for the Sikh's want of confidence: but as an illustration of the curious memories that remain fixed in one's mind during moments of extreme excitement and responsibility. With this warning ringing in my ears, I gave the signal for the assault. The Afridis, as one man, sprang to their feet and raced with levelled bayonets for the goal.

It was only when the *ziarat* was gained, and the fire with which we had harried the fleeing garrison had died down, that I realized how terrific was the radiated heat on that blazing hill-side. I was almost in a state of collapse. The Sikh signaller, however much he distrusted his Afridi comrades, understood captured positions and a wilted commander. Under a lean-to he found a cow. He milked her into his pannikin. Never before, nor since, have I drunk such an invigorating nectar as was that fresh-drawn draught. It acted upon me as an immediate elixir.

Owing to the extreme mobility of these Yagistan tribesmen, and the paucity of their *lares* and *penates*, their punishment and pacification always seemed to me a very indefinite affair. True their loopholed towers were destroyed and their homesteads burnt, but at the best these were replaceable affairs of mud and rafter. The

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Mohmand Expedition paraded through arid valleys and over forbidding mountain passes, sniped and annoyed both by day and night by invisible marksmen. It shelled and demolished a percentage of villages temporarily deserted by their inhabitants and then retraced its steps to Peshawar. Everyone, including the enemy elders, agreed that there had been sufficient blood-letting to cool for a decade the adventurous ardour of impetuous youth, and the patient Indian tax-payer footed the bill.

Westmacott's Brigade was detailed to join a new Field Force that was concentrating at Peshawar, to carry the weight of India's wrath into another section of Trans-Frontier independence. This was the Tirah Expedition, a formidable affair of two Divisions commanded by General Sir W. Lockhart. Again a composite force of British and Indian troops was to penetrate into a difficult mountainous country, practically unknown to white men and surveyed only as far as natives in disguise could effect a casual estimate. The problem that faced the British Commander was not a small one. He had to penetrate into the centre of this unknown, roadless cluster of mountains. To do this he had only a matter of weeks at his disposal, since, even if so large a force could have wintered at the altitudes in which these Afridis had their homes, the snowfall must have isolated it from supply.

Such being the problem, and the story of past disasters to British Arms in the wild mountains of Afghanistan still being a living memory,

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more than ordinary interest centred in the Expedition. This interest reacted to me in the very precise instructions that I received from *Reuter's* Bureau in Old Jewry. Fortunately, I was able to make a good delivery early in the day.

Lockhart's campaign in Tirah began with a false start. As I have already said it is not the purpose of this narrative to discuss military operations except from my own personal point of view as a camp follower. The fact that the opening action in Lockhart's campaign was a reconnaissance in force, conducted by his second-in-command, that somehow developed into a general action, which the Commander-in-Chief saw fit to stop in mid-fight, is a matter that military historians may wrestle with.

It is sufficient for my story that the advance into the enemy's country in earnest came two days later and resulted in the action that added to the Gordon Highlanders' traditions at Dargai. I had a splendid panoramic view of those stirring incidents, with the knowledge ever before me that both my Press Censor and the telegraph office were 20 miles distant to my rear. That evening I rode back those 20 miles along the Samana Range to Army Headquarters, and wrote and dispatched a message that, allowing for the variation between Occidental and Oriental time, permitted the evening papers in London to print the news that day.

I had found that the Press Censor was General Lord Methuen. Of the many Press Censors with whom I have been associated during my

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career as a Correspondent in the Field, none have been more understanding than was Lord Methuen. In the first place, his seniority and his knowledge of war placed him, as a Censor, in a category by himself. He knew exactly what information was detrimental to the interest of the army in the Field. He had clear and decided views on the conduct of warlike operations, and was ever ready to share his ripe experience with those who cared to profit by it. He appreciated the value of time in the dispatch of news, and was always accessible no matter the hour of day or night. I have always cherished, as one of my most valuable memories, my close association with the gallant Field Marshal during those weeks we were together in Tirah.

As I have already said, I decided to make my home with General Westmacott's Brigade. I joined the Transport Mess of that unit. It consisted of Major Watson, fatherly and complaisant, Commissariat Officer; Captain Fraser, dogmatic and earnest, Assistant to Watson; Captain Armstrong, lean and wiry, Transport Officer; Major Carthew-Yorstoun, cynic and theorist, Provost Marshal. Among the many convoying Transport Officers who temporarily used our Mess was one Captain Hubert Gough, of the 16th Lancers. None of us, I am sure, visualized in this rather self-contained young cavalry officer with an engaging smile, the grim Army Commander of twenty years later of the Somme and Passchendaele battlefields.

My personal entourage consisted of Jangat

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Ram, my native body-servant who had come with me from Behar; my muleteer, lent by the Government; and Baj Mahomed. The last-named was an Orakzai Afridi who had attached himself to me at the Base, and who served me with dog-like fidelity. He was a lithe, handsome youth, adorned by nature with all the attributes of face, figure and manner that endear men to women. As my narrative will show, I owe much to Baj Mahomed. He was as gallant as he was debonair.

After the initial success at Dargai, the expedition marched into the unknown territory of the Afridis. The first move was into the Khanki Valley. Here we halted for some days.

The camp in the Khanki Valley was upon a low plateau, formed in the centre of a reach of the river that gives to the valley its name. In comparison to the surrounding country the reach was broad and open. It was, however, commanded on every side by forbidding masses of hill, many of which were clothed in pine woods. These hills with their abutting ridges were too far from the actual camp, and too huge, to picket, yet they were within rifle-shot of the bivouac.

The target which the camp gave to the predatory night stalker can be imagined when it is realized that, cramped upon this tiny plateau, in bivouac, were 18,000 troops, 17,000 followers, and several thousand horses and transport mules. Every evening knots of adventurous Afridis collected at points of vantage commanding the camp, and opened a dropping fire which,

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spasmodically, was continued throughout the night.

There are few sensations in this world so unwholesome as this first experience of lying awake at night, while the sniper is at his work. The bullets wail overhead with awe-inspiring frequency. From time to time they strike with a sickening thud, and you shiver as you realize that some sleeping human or patient animal has been hit. There is a scream of pain, or a hubbub of voices followed by cries for a doctor or a stretcher.

The imaginative mind falls to speculating upon his individual chances. It is the impotence of one's position that causes the teeth to chatter. Yet such is the fatalistic tendency of the human mind that, after but a brief experience of the sniper's venom, the soldier will sleep through his attentions as soundly as if the chances of grievous hurt were a thousand miles removed. If it had been otherwise, all ranks of the Tirah Field Force rapidly would have developed into nervous wrecks. A camp for 30,000 men covers a big area. Although from time to time some immediate incident brought the horror of it all vividly home to the individual, yet in the general sense sniping was simply written off as a contingent nuisance.

It must not, however, be thought that Lockhart's Force remained entirely passive under this nightly punishment. The best antidote was furnished by the Gurkha Scouts. By day or by night these sturdy little desperadoes were quite equal to and ready to measure them-

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selves with the Pathan. Shod in grass shoes, they sallied forth in the darkness and silently stalked the skulking night-firers. The Gurkha has almost feline faculties and the morrow's sun usually rose upon many a headless Pathan trunk in what had been a sniper's pitch.

Let me record one somewhat gruesome example of this. While the officers of the Gurkhas were having a daybreak breakfast, a little dishevelled rifleman hesitatingly came up to the group round the tarpaulin that served as a makeshift table. The Adjutant demanded his business. The miniature soldier replied that he wished the Colonel Sahib to certify that he was not a liar. Explanations being required, he added that he had been out upon a night patrol, and that he had stalked and killed an enemy sniper. But when he had returned Man Singh of his company had called him a liar, and maintained that his story of a kill was mere bravado. He had therefore gone out again forthwith, and brought back the proof. Whereupon the small man, who had been holding one hand behind his back, rolled the head of a recently decapitated Pathan on to the Mess tarpaulin. The Colonel allowed that his honour was vindicated, and with some asperity bade him remove the grisly evidence.

For the most part my colleagues of the Press in this campaign were serving soldiers, utilizing the Press to satisfy the imperative call of active service otherwise denied to them. But two professional artists joined us at Khanki. One of these was Melton Prior. Prior was the first

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of the old and original type of British War Correspondent that I had met. I was apprehensive of an association with an artist with such a distinguished record. Never was apprehension more misplaced. Instead of the bloodthirsty swashbuckler of my imagination, I found a kindly little old man who could have had no enemy other than himself, since his method of seeking publicity and his rather blatant self-advertisement was the antithesis of his simple and generous nature. But for the genius of his imaginative pencil, Melton Prior was the prototype of the thousands of colourless citizens who daily flock to and fro between Suburbia and the City. Yet he had made us familiar with the atmosphere of over twenty campaigns. I, at least, owe him a handsome recognition for that service alone.

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CHAPTER IV

GOOD DELIVERY

AFTER certain delaying actions of the tribesmen at the passes, the last barrier into the forbidden land was passed. Maidan, the heart of Yagistan Afridi-land, was reached. As Maidan is still, practically, a *terra incognita*, I may be forgiven if I put on record my recollection of this stupendous mountain-girt valley, when its view first broke upon us as we looked down upon the promised land from the summit of the last divide that Lockhart's Field Force captured. It was a magnificent view: from the foot of the fir-grown slope stretched a luxuriant valley, to the west as far as eye could reach, to the east for miles. Its area was at least a hundred square miles. This was the valley of Tirah-Maidan, the spot which, the Afridi was fain to boast, no infidel had ever gazed upon, the virgin valley which no alien army had ever invaded. It was broken here and there by undulations, ravines and watercourses, and the contours of the grey enclosing hills were defined in countless terraces. Every inch that could be levelled seemed to be under cultivation, and the expanse of arable land was sprinkled with walnut groves and baked mud villages.

Nature was wrapped in its autumn colouring, and it seemed that a great peace reigned over this

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coveted valley. The landscape was so immense, that its very expanse suggested a peace and silence that the popping of a few stray advance-guard shots could not dispel.

Of such are the deceptions of our senses. That night the Afridis were gutting the belated baggage train and slitting the throats of the unlucky muleteers. A prelude to the blood-washed six weeks the Army spent in this "peaceful" valley.

These six weeks were occupied in punitive excursions into the many enclaves that could be reached by the gorges that radiated from Maidan. As had been the case in the earlier Mohmand Expedition, the sight of smoke columns from their byres brought the elders in to parley. Late in November Lockhart began to negotiate seriously with the various sections of the Maidan Afridis. The mediation was through Colonel Warburton of the Political Service. Warburton was himself half a Pathan, his father having married a beautiful Afghan lady during the first Afghan War.

The effect of these negotiations was the usual indefinite settlement with most of the sections. The Zakka Khel, the most determined *ladrones* of the Frontier, however, remained recalcitrant. There was no effective method of putting pressure upon them, and Warburton promised a lively resistance by them, when the Force essayed to complete its punitive mission by a retirement upon India down the Bara Valley.

In point of fact all negotiation with the Afridis was fatuous as long as one section remained recalcitrant, as whenever the latter raised the flag of resistance, love of fighting and the hope

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of *loot*, rallied the young bloods of the other sections to the lists. The weather and the season, however, was pressing its urgency upon Lockhart. Snow was threatening, and unless he wished to be weatherbound, he must evacuate Maidan. On December 5th he rolled up his communications with India by way of Mastura and Khanki, and with one Division set out for India by the Bara Valley route. The other Division marched back to India through Waran.

Owing to the so-called submission of the Maidan Afridis, the Field Force left Bagh in peace and goodwill. Myself I look back upon those six weeks in the heart of the Afridi country with satisfaction. I witnessed as much rough fighting as any adventurous youth could desire. My journalistic deliveries had been good. The reason for this was substantial. In the field of telegraphic news I had no professional rival, and the good Baj Mahomed was a most intelligent and rapid courier. Such is the laxity of matters in this class of savage warfare that Baj Mahomed would return with my receipts from my telegraphic and postal base, with a parcel of letters, collected from his friends, our enemies, in position around us to be posted in our camp field letter-boxes, to their fathers, brothers and sons, serving Her Majesty in their respective regiments in India.

The peace and goodwill only lasted until the decision to leave Maidan was manifest. As soon as the Division concentrated at the head of the Bara Valley the tribesmen were again entirely hostile. The morning of the final concentration preparatory to the descent of the valley has left

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a memorable impression. It was a scene typical of this very class of warfare. It was a bleak, biting winter's day, with the north wind sweeping down in icy blast from the snow on Safed Koh.

On both sides of the stony river reach the field terraces were filling up, fed by the constant stream of transport. Animals and men were worn, tired and chilled to the bone.

Among the pine trees, on a slope above the camp, a party of Gurkhas were dislodging a few scattered marksmen, who, armed with Lee-Metfords, ranged the camp with the regularity of minute guns. Below the Gurkhas another party of dwarf marauders were dismantling the byres and homestead of some local chief; while below these again, the men of a British regiment, just in from the weary night march and naked as to their legs, were drying their nether garments before a line of crackling fires. Beneath these again, the transport animals were in their lines, picketed in dense closed-up rows. The little beasts, ragged and bear-coated, were, after a twenty-four hours' fast, ravenously attacking the forage which a train of mules had just brought in from the valley.

So cold had the weather become that the very transport animals were stamping to keep warm. Men of all regimental and camp following denominations were dismantling the nearer homesteads in the quest of fire-wood: when the need was so urgent nothing was sacred: outhouses, byres, mosques and even graves were requisitioned in the mad rush for fuel. Staff Officers were flitting hither and thither, wet to the waist, as half a

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dozen icy streams had to be waded before a verbal order could be passed across the river: a section of a mountain battery was trotting out to support a Sikh picket that was in immediate difficulty. The guns had splashed through the transport mass, just as a relieved picket of Scottish Borderers were claiming way for their dead and wounded comrades from the hill-top fighting of the previous night. In that shivering crush there was no time to have pity for these unfortunates.

How callous these past weeks had made us all. The battered living and pallid dead were carried through a group of fifty followers, who, cooking their first meal since many hours, and under the warming influence of the fires, were lost to all considerations outside their personal comfort. Even the realities of war in its sternest manifestation did not disturb them. The Lee-Metford marksmen were still in position, and the "spit" of their bullets flicked into the crowd. A shot found a billet in one of these wretched followers. He nursed his wounded limb and whined while his callous fellows, pushing him aside, took his place at the cooking-pot.

I myself slept my last night in Tirah under cover. I found a loft in the tower of a homestead that was a Brigade Headquarters. My companion was Captain Fagan of Jacob's Horse. Early on the morning of December 10th, before it was yet light, we were awakened by a voice sounding up from the lower chamber:

"Is there anyone up there?"

To the answer in the affirmative the voice replied: "Well, you had better come down

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d——d quick, as we are going to blow this tower up in less than ten minutes' time!"

The rapidity with which the evacuation of that tower was effected was astonishing. I had spent half the night in bringing my dispatches up to date and consequently had overslept. By the time my baggage was ready to move off my late bedchamber was a smoking heap of rubble and the Afridis were upon the rear-guard in hot attack. I hastened to join the advance-guard. The memorable retirement down the Bara Valley had begun!

A volume could be written round the story of the march down this mountain defile. Road there was none, but the river bed. For four days and nights it was an unbroken rearguard battle, and the masses of troops and transport were the constant mark and quarry of vicious snipers. At times the baggage train became an uncontrollable mass, more or less bogged in the rice fields that skirted the water-way. These were the occasions by which the hawk-eyed tribesmen profited. Girding up their flowing skirts, Khyber knife in hand, they rushed in amongst the terror-stricken muleteers. Time and time again the situation became so critical that the Medical Officers marching with the wounded became combatants in hand-to-hand struggles. The rear-guards and flank-guards were fighting without respite from sun up until night-fall.

Fortunately for me the Force was halted for twenty-four hours at Sher Khel, where the valley broadened out into an extensive and defensible reach. As Lockhart had now been lost in the blue, as far as India was concerned, for a week,

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and as there had been a considerable divergence of opinion as to the wisdom of this Bara Valley adventure, I realized that as a journalist I had a great story to unfold and that it behoved me to be early in the field. I therefore employed my time during the halt in preparing my telegrams, and induced Lord Methuen to censor and frank them for dispatch. Thus munitioned I determined to make an effort to be the first man through to meet the Peshawar Column that had started to move up towards us from India. I also enjoined Baj Mahomed, my tame Pathan courier, that he was not to let me out of his sight, either by night or by day, until further orders.

We all knew that December 13th would be the most memorable day in the history of the campaign. Our enemy were thoroughly elated and emboldened. Moreover, they knew that this last day's march was the final chance that they would have with so many of the physical advantages on their side. From the moment the pickets fell in until two hours after dark it was a continuous action of the most desperate character. The Afridis were out to do or die. They abandoned their habitual caution. They behaved as if contemptuous of death and forced the fighting with an initiative that no Frontier officer has seen either before or since. Theirs was not altogether blind courage. They made a determined and cunningly devised effort to force the rear-guard into the cul-de-sac of the Guli Khel defile. This effort was only frustrated by the seizure of a commanding plateau. This, however, entailed a premature halt and isolation for the night.

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As night fell Westmacott found himself cut off. His men had almost fought themselves to a standstill. Orakzai country had now been reached; it was therefore hoped that the fighting might peter out. Vain hope. The tribesmen had collected to make a final onslaught by which to crush the rear-guard. They came on with terrific *élan*, so that amongst that brushwood we saw more actual enemies than we had ever seen before at such close ranges. For a moment it seemed that the tired men who had been fighting all day would be enveloped, overrun and swept away. The *shiver* was momentary. The officers threw themselves into the firing line; magazines worked freely; the very bushes seemed to bow down before the sheet of defending lead. The leading ghazis melted away; the onrush was swept back—swept back from the very bayonet's point—back into the closing darkness. The tribesmen never tried a second rush. They were content to snipe and butcher the helpless camp followers.

Just as darkness fell I detached myself from the rear-guard. As I was slinking down into the river-way, with Baj Mahomed as my companion, I met Fraser, my own messmate. "You will never get through," was his encouraging remark, when I told him my intention.

More than once that night it was brought in upon me that Fraser was within a hair's-breadth of being a true prophet.

Even after thirty years the memory of that journey is still a nightmare.

The better to guide his more clumsy companion Baj Mahomed took me by the hand. During the

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three short miles that separated the rear-guard from the main-guard's bivouac, he constantly pulled me into the shadow of some bush, crevice or rock.

"Don't breathe even!" he whispered in my ear.

Footsteps were audible. Sometimes the shambling strokes of a booted soldier; then the cat-like swish of grass shoes. From out the grim shadows came the constant wails of anguish, where wretched Hindustanis were craving for mercy. They ended in shrieks and the slice of a Khyber knife. There was tragedy in the shade of every bush and boulder. Why dwell upon the horror of it?

Baj Mahomed piloted me safely through this valley of the shadow of death and by some devious path avoided the main-guard's bivouac. Journeying with the caution of disturbed thieves, we struggled on until about ten o'clock we struck the outlying pickets of the Peshawar column. Once these were safely passed I was in clover, as Baj Mahomed had hit off a picket of the 9th Gurkhas, which regiment was commanded by my uncle. Consequently, before eleven o'clock the whole story of Lockhart's retirement down the Bara Valley was on the wires.

The next morning in the columns of the Calcutta *Englishman*, after several anxious days of silence, the Government of India had their first news of Lockhart's successful descent of the Bara Valley.

At last I had made a first-class journalistic Delivery. Baj Mahomed deserves most of the credit, for without him that night journey would surely have been ended by a Khyber knife.

Except for excursions into the Bazar Valley

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and Bonair, the campaign petered out with the return of Lockhart's Expedition from Tirah.

I took farewell of my friends in the Field Force, and took train to the East of India where I belonged. When I arrived in Calcutta, I was received with some enthusiasm at the offices of the *Englishman*, and I experienced the exquisite pleasure of realizing that on this occasion I had made a real success of the affairs with which I had been entrusted. Not only were the editors of the two Indian newspapers which I had represented satisfied, but the Chairman of *Reuter's* Agency sent me a congratulatory cablegram, which was substantially supported by an unexpected *bonus* in cash. I will not say that all this turned my head, but it led me to think seriously of journalism as a profession, in spite of the cold douche that Chesney of the *Pioneer* had given to my previous ambition. I must admit, however, that it was a great satisfaction to me when the Editor of the *Englishman* maintained that, in his opinion, I had "wiped the eye of the *Pioneer*." If it is true, it was the end that I had, devoutly, set myself to accomplish. Something, therefore, had been done.

I had intended returning to England, in order to establish in a more fertile soil the bubble reputation I had made in India. However, certain incidents occurred on the North-West Frontier. These untoward events delayed the demobilization of the Field Force, and even made the re-occupation of Tirah in the coming spring a possibility.

Reuter's were again anxious that I should represent them at the Front. At the end of January,

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1898, I therefore found myself back at Peshawar. Major Hathaway, the Master of the Peshawar Vale Hunt, offered me the hospitality of his bungalow, and for two months I lingered in or near this Frontier station.

Life is very pleasant in Peshawar during the early spring. The Peshawar Vale is at its best during this season. The peach groves are all in blossom. I had many good days with Hathaway's celebrated pack. The fields were large, because every officer of the Tirah Field Force within reach who could raise a mount came out to hounds. If you have a horse that will jump water freely, as I fortunately had, you can have the best of sport with the Peshawar Vale in surroundings that call to mind a page of the *Arabian Nights*.

My friends of the Gurkha Scout Battalion were at Landi Kotal at the farther end of the Khyber Pass. Lucas and Bruce, who commanded them, were particular cronies of mine. Lucas, I fear, was killed in the Great War; but the burly, gallant Bruce, subsequently of Mount Everest fame, is happily still with us.

It was at Landi Kotal, when I was with the Scouts, that I first met Winston Churchill. He was then a subaltern in the 4th Hussars, and serving for a short period on Lockhart's Staff. He was a rather tempestuous youth with a ready tongue that was much given to laying down the law. Soldiers smiled at him, and said that he had been spoiled by the Colonel of his regiment, who had given him more rope than was good for a subaltern. Perhaps his Colonel was wiser than his generation, for no one at Peshawar saw in this

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over-energetic youth, who early affected the then novel Jodhpur breeching, the future great Minister of State. I was to see much more of Churchill in the days to come.

As Lockhart, through the Political Department, was still negotiating with the enemy, and as their tribal representatives were meeting Warburton at Jamrud, I established a canvas *pied-à-terre* beneath the walls of the gaunt fortress that sits sentinel-like across the jaws of the Khyber, and divided my time between my duty there as a journalist and the flesh-pots of Peshawar. It was very interesting to mingle with the tribesmen who were "palavering" with Warburton, and to hear their version of the fighting in which we had all so recently been engaged. There was one amusing incident which remains vividly in my mind.

The men of a British regiment at Jamrud played football in the afternoons. The young Afridis with the enemy deputations sat for two days in a long row on the side-lines and watched the game with rapt interest. Then on the third day the excitement became too much for them. The fever of the thing intoxicated them and they rushed into the game. Their one idea was possession of the ball, and even the American football game must be reckoned feeble in comparison with the ferocity of the zest with which they battled for the ball. They became a howling, brawling and vindictive mob, and it was only by the intervention of the provost's police that bloodshed was averted.

They are a strange people, these wild children of the Border. I do not profess to understand them, but once you can gain their respect and

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confidence as I had done with Baj Mahomed all trace of their treacherous disposition vanishes. Their loyalty to a man to whom they have become attached is almost canine.

My brother has lived amongst these wild Border folk as a Political Officer all his service. He once recounted to me the following instance of their ready response to the master hand. He had been appointed to the executive administration of a particularly recalcitrant corner of the Border. He succeeded a weak colleague. At the first tribal meeting, when he had invited the headmen to be seated before him, one of them cleared his throat and spat on the ground. My brother, who had the advantage of having spent most of his boyhood in India, knew the covert insult which this action implied. He jumped up, and, swinging his chair, knocked the offender senseless. The rest of the headmen applauded this action, and as the offender was pulled away by his heels their only comment was, "Serve the ill-mannered beast right!" From that moment this particular sept ceased to be recalcitrant. They had applied their test, and now knew the manner of man with whom they had to deal.

But within their own frontiers they are desperately cruel and dangerous. The sad fate of Sir Henry Havelock-Allan, V.C., during this very period of inaction at Jamrud brought this trait vividly into relief. This quaint individual, who in the days of his youth had been one of the most gallant soldiers, when all soldiers were gallant in the Indian Mutiny, had arrived at Headquarters with his equally quaint retainer, one Nibbs, as

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Sir William Lockhart's guest. Each morning when Havelock-Allan met me he was careful to impress upon me that his presence at the Front must be kept a profound secret, as a grave matter concerning Assurance Policies was involved.

Poor fellow, some few days later, he was shot dead in the Khyber Pass by an Afridi boy of ten. For some reason that will never be known he rode alone up the pass, and some Afridis who were watching the road from an eyrie, encouraged the child to have a shot at him. Thus died miserably the man who bore a charmed life during a score of desperate affrays in 1857, in order that an infant Border robber might test his prowess with a lethal weapon, and run glad-eyed to an indulgent, doting mother, to inform her that he was now a worthy son. He had killed his man with his father's rifle. Warburton gleaned the details of this tragedy from the tribal peacemakers with whom he was in daily negotiation. To them the life of an unarmed enemy within their Border line was of no more account than would be that of a chicken.

By the beginning of March it was evident to everyone, including the enemy, that nothing short of a cataclysm would induce the Indian Government to persevere with its threat to re-occupy Tirah, and I advised my employers that I was only wasting my time and their money by remaining longer on the Frontier. In this they agreed and I returned to Calcutta and Behar preparatory to leaving for England.

It will be observed that I have refrained from any criticism upon the conduct of the operations.

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Although my experience was not great, nevertheless I had begun to formulate certain ideas as to the correct duties and responsibilities of a Special Correspondent in the Field. Rightly or wrongly I had come to the conclusion that the first duty of the Correspondent in the Field should be confined to description of events in their chronological order, rather than criticism of any methods employed. Nor, since I became a professional journalist, have I had much occasion to deviate from this original conception. The duty of the Correspondent is fearlessly to supply facts, be they good, bad or indifferent. The right place for comment is the newspaper office, to the direction of the Editor. Many an aspirant in the field of special War Correspondence would have made a better success of his venture if he had confined himself exclusively to facts and had left the comment to others.

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CHAPTER V

NEW GROUND

I ARRIVED home in England in April, 1898. In common with some other journalists, who have won their spurs in India, I was inclined to accept at face value the congratulations upon my success in these Frontier excursions. I was to learn that, in a literary sense, I was still only a provincial. A British Force was operating in the Egyptian Soudan, America was bullying Spain over Cuba. In my simplicity I thought that there would be considerable competition amongst the great London newspapers to secure my services.

I, naturally, went first to Old Jewry to report to *Reuter's* Agency. Bradshaw, the Manager, received me with chilling pomposity. Herbert de Reuter, however, was more human; he invited me to lunch at his City Club, and showed not only a keen interest in the late campaign, but a very accurate knowledge of military proportion, and an extraordinary fund of intelligent information on every subject that we discussed. Herbert de Reuter was perfectly business-like. He was genuinely grateful for the services which I had done him in India, but he felt that he had requited them in as generous a manner as they had been given. There was no further opening at present.

Then it was that I felt the first chill of that

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unkind London atmosphere, that has frozen the souls of so many hundreds of thousands of ambitious youths in every walk of life, I bethought me of a letter of introduction which I had in my pocket. Bennett of *The Times of India* had said: "Harmsworth is the rising power in London journalism. I know him well. I will give you a letter to him."

I returned to my hotel and wrote a letter to Harmsworth and enclosed the Bennett introduction. The next morning I received a telegram: "Have no place for War Correspondents.—HARMSWORTH."

This was even more chilling than Old Jewry. Reuter had at least produced a slap-up lunch. I was nettled. I replied by wire: "Read my letter never asked for employment as War Correspondent."

This brought an answer, also by wire, requesting me to call on the following morning at the *Daily Mail* offices at 11.50 a.m., and not to be late, as the morning was partitioned into engagements.

The meeting with Harmsworth was unproductive. It could hardly have been otherwise, since it was not in my nature to creep into a presence, and misled by Harmsworth's youth and unmindful of the Napoleonic pose I mistook him for a secretary. Neither party at this interview was impressed with the other. The meeting resulted in my promising to write a weekly article from India on my return to Asia.

By the accident of the change in proprietorship of *The Times*, ten years later I became the servant

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of Lord Northcliffe. This closer association with the Napoleon of London's Press never caused me to alter the opinion of him which I had formed at this first interview: and little in the late Lord Northcliffe's attitude ever suggested that he had improved his opinion of me.

This second blast of the London atmosphere froze up all my ambition. I determined to leave journalism as a profession alone, and to return to India, race-horses and the ploughshare. In the meantime I wandered over to Brussels. Ever since I had become interested in military affairs, I had craved to see the field of Waterloo. When this craving was satisfied and I understood the topography of those two small slopes I was filled with a profound sense of the impossibility of it all. Two hostile armies bivouacked within the space of one square mile! I bethought me of the "battlefields" I had recently seen, when two expeditious Afridis armed with magazine rifles from 1,000 yards had caused whole brigades to deploy and artillery to come into action.

In June I was wasting my time in England playing polo, with the idea of seeing if there might be any profit in the mother country in resuscitating the pony-coping business I had abandoned in India.

Reuter intervened to upset these embryo plans. Herbert de Reuter offered to send me as the Agency's representative with Sir Herbert Kitchener during his final operations against the Khalifa. I, however, had been so chilled by the journalistic frigidity of London, that I did not readily accept the offer. A visit to Old Jewry,

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however, changed my attitude. This time old Bradshaw was almost effusive in his welcome; Herbert de Reuter was, as usual, direct and business-like, and it was agreed that I should leave immediately for Egypt.

Nevertheless I did not accept this new employment altogether with a light heart. In India my work had been comparatively easy. I knew the country and the language. There had been no competition. I had met no professional rivals. My colleagues on the Press had been, with the exception of the artists, serving soldiers, who only used their newspaper as a means to participate in the experience and rewards of active service. Now I would meet in rivalry men who had made large reputations in the field of military journalism, men who consequently knew "every trick of the trade."

The die, however, was cast, and I had to go through with my obligations. I found that W. T. Maud, the *Graphic* artist, whom I had met on the Indian Frontier, was also under orders for the Omdurman Campaign. Maud, who had seen service in the Dongola Expedition, knew the ground, and invited me to join forces with him.

We made the journey together and on arrival at Cairo found that Kitchener considered it too soon for the Press to take the field. The wait at Cairo, however, was pleasant enough. The old Continental Hotel, Nunkovitch's first venture, was then the anchorage for all the various craft collecting for the Front. There gathered the officers of the Rifle Brigade, Mills, Biddulph, Paley, Gough and Dawnay, who had come with their units from

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Malta. What a merry, adventurous collection we were! Of these young Riflemen, Biddulph may still be alive, but Cæsar's Camp, Ladysmith, claimed poor Mills, and Paley, Gough and Dawnay were all killed in Flanders. All three had proved themselves brilliant soldiers. Little did we realize, as we tried ponies in front of the hotel, or made expeditions to the Mena House and the Pyramids, what the future held in store for us.

The Continental sparkled with the enthusiasm of the scores of young men, who had the true light of their profession in their eyes. Here also I first met Major à Court, then a Brigade-Major, who as à Court Repington was destined to be my colleague for many years upon *The Times*, and incidentally, when I myself had become a soldier, in the emergency of the Great War, was destined to destroy a British Government through his representations of the deficiencies at the Front in France.

Here I again forgathered with Morgan, late of the Devons, whom I had known in India, now of the Army Service Corps and attached to the Egyptian Army. Morgan was probably the greatest sutler of his time, for in the South African War he invented the Field Force Canteen, an institution which millions of British soldiers would have thanked him for, if, after the World War he had been alive and had been known to them. As in the case of many other great men, through whose intelligence and foresight the public have profited, the jackals tried to pull him down, and after South Africa Morgan was accused of developing Government resources to his own profit. An

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accusation that none could prove. Money in bulk meant nothing to him, but an immediate small profit suggested everything. He would have sold you the boots he stood in, if the sale could have turned him a sixpenny-bit. Kitchener was the first to see value in Morgan. The sordid fetish for trifling gain that possessed the man amused and attracted the Sirdar. So much so that he permitted Morgan to bring up the Nile a civilian brother as his coadjutor. This second Morgan did private huckstering, and would produce tins of cigarettes out of his pockets to be traded at cut prices with all and sundry. From such small beginnings arose that gigantic boon to all soldiers—the Field Force Canteen. Morgan should have been raised to the peerage; bureaucracy did its best to court-martial him.

In due course the order arrived permitting Press Correspondents to go to the Front. Maud and I were the only two of the craft that had arrived, so together we took the field with a supply of commissariat, which, to my frugal mind, trained on the Indian Frontier, seemed out of all proportion to our needs.

The journey up the Nile was interesting, since the train only took the traveller as far as Assuan. A river steamer then plied with him up to Wadi Halfa, where the Military Railway was met. On our steamer we found Colin Keppel of the Navy, hurrying south to command the Sirdar's flotilla of gunboats.

At Wadi Halfa the travellers were very cordially entertained by the Sappers' Mess. It was an education to meet at their hospitable board these

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youthful soldier-engineers who had made Kitchener's campaign possible by pushing his strategic railway bluntly into the desert. They seemed such boys as they discussed the trivialities of the day round the messroom table to have accomplished so much. The "Mail" train—we were in open trucks sleeping upon ammunition boxes—left Wadi Halfa by night.

It was a striking sensation to wake in the morning and find the train forging its way across a desert of yellow sand which seemed as boundless as the ocean. On every side was a winding waste of wind-driven sand dunes. The building of that desert railway was the key to Kitchener's greatness. Stripped of the military necessity that demanded its construction, it was perhaps no great engineering feat. The greatness in the venture lay in the circumstance that surrounded it, and the method that Kitchener, for financial reasons, had to employ. The railway bridged 200 miles of desert, the greater part of which would permit of no survey except within water-distance of the actual spot the construction trains had reached.

Atbara was rail-head and the Sirdar's Headquarters. The train jerked us into Atbara at sundown, the hour when the Soudan becomes bearable. Maud and I were hospitably received by Colonel "Taffy" Lewis and his Staff. Lewis was one of that splendid band of bachelor British Officers who had made the Egyptian Army. He commanded a brigade and that night he gave us a sumptuous dinner. If Lewis knew all that there was to be known about desert warfare, he also

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included in this knowledge the science of good living.

In the morning we were shown the dust-heap upon which the privileged camp-followers were to erect their temporary canvas homes. I had understood that Correspondents were not welcome with Kitchener's Command. It is true that his officers, one and all, courteously enough, avoided discussion of immediate military affairs, but otherwise every one was pleasant and helpful. A curious chance had brought me into an unofficial relationship with the Sirdar upon several previous occasions. There was a fiction that this autocrat of the desert was a misogynist. Who was responsible for the fiction or for what purpose it was exploited does not interest me. I knew it was a fiction, since he was an intimate friend of a lady who showed me many kindnesses in my youth, and in the days of our unofficial meeting I never met anyone less worthy of the somewhat unnatural definition than the late Field Marshal.

The Sirdar was living in the only house in Atbara. It had been expressly built for him. I went to report to him, as soon as our camp was settled. In the foyer I found Bimbashi Watson, the Sirdar's A.D.C. He was sorting mess stores when I arrived, and he said, smilingly:

"Want to see the Sirdar? You are in luck; he's in a good humour this morning!"

Kitchener was certainly affable. He was sitting at his desk with a *tarboosh* cocked rakishly over one eye, and he smiled encouragingly as he shook hands. He never, however, made any initial suggestion that we had met before. He talked of

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his preparations in a general manner, and said that they were up to time, and ended the interview by saying dryly, "If ever you want anything, come to me; I can do more for you here than can anyone else"; and then as an afterthought he added cryptically, with that little cynical smile of his: "You have some advantages: if you would profit by them, don't press them!"

I walked back to my tent full of thought. The Sirdar had been frankly friendly. It did not, however (at least this is how I read his final admonition), suit his policy in his official relations with the Correspondents, that there should be among them one who, upon purely unofficial grounds, might consider that he had any particular claim to his consideration. I certainly had not found in his manner any of that austerity or aloofness that I had been led to believe was the make-up of his official bearing. It may be said here at once, that in all my subsequent dealings with Lord Kitchener, which spread over a good many years, I never found him anything but reasonable, though strong-minded, in his attitude towards the official business between us.

That Kitchener at one period refused to be hampered by indiscreet journalists doubtless was responsible for the uncompromising character with which he was credited. Special Correspondents have sometimes lost, in their anxiety to nourish the pages of their journals, the true perspective of their significance in war. It was a matter in which this tendency was observed that first brought the Sirdar into conflict with his Press Correspondents, and caused him to exact a written

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engagement from every officer in the Egyptian Army that he would never communicate any information to the Press.

This incident and the publicity it received, together with the fanciful though engaging pen-picture which the late George Steevens drew of him as an iron-souled master of men, was in the main responsible for the popular belief that he was an uncompromising autocrat. In reality he was very human. Kitchener no doubt often smiled grimly over this pleasing portraiture, for in my experience I have never met a public man who knew better the value of the public Press. What was more important, he also knew its limitations, and that is where the Pressmen who broke a lance with him came to grief.

When I returned to our new home on the dust-heap, I found that another train had arrived and brought with it a further contingent of Correspondents. Maud was engaged in an animated conversation with a spruce little man with a neat pointed red beard, who affected a dress half-way between that of a *haut école* circus rider and a bushranger. This was Frank Scudamore of the *Daily News*.

Seated on one of our provision boxes was a thin, pale man in glasses, who was evidently somewhat fatigued by the journey. This was the great George Steevens.

These two distinguished men completed our little mess of which, it was evident from the initial introductions, I was not yet to be received as a very consequential member. Scudamore, whose knowledge of war dated back to Plevna, looked

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upon the youth from the Indian Frontier as a novitiate, while Steevens was such a shy man that this trait often suggested a rudeness that was really entirely foreign to his nature.

The other Correspondents who reached Atbara about this time were Colonel Frank Rhodes and the Hon. Hubert Howard, both for *The Times*. The late Colonel Rhodes is too well known to call for any description. His colleague was a headstrong youth of great intellectual promise who seemed more bent upon desperate adventure than the duty and toils of journalism. He was, poor youth, within ten days of his end. The *Daily Telegraph* was represented by Bennett Burleigh, a lusty example of Glasgow vehemence. A delicate aristocrat called Weldon served the *Morning Post*, while the *Standard* had sent into the desert a sterling little piece of Fleet Street, in the shape of William Maxwell. That soured veteran Charles Williams did duty for the *Daily Chronicle*, while memory fails to allocate the exact representations of Villiers, Bennett-Stanford, Oppenheim, René Bull, Gregson, Bennett and Cross.

I watched my new colleagues closely. The racing stable had taught me the value of a close attention to form. I therefore studied as far as was practical the individual habits of my new associates. A week's study found me quite comfortable in my mind that there was little real need for apprehension on my part. I was not concerned with literary excellence. It was possible that one and all of my rivals could drive a pen with far more literary skill than was my pretension. My own business was not the forming

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of neat sentences. *Reuter* only required information. The phraseology in which this information was expressed was a secondary matter. My intercourse during the halt at Atbara with the Corps of Correspondents satisfied me that, taken collectively, they did not possess a very high level of military knowledge, and that the most dangerous amongst them did not possess that combination of qualities which the writer, perhaps unwisely, had considered essential in a really first-class War Correspondent.

I therefore went about the business of my own preparations in my own way. Early in life it had been brought home to me that success rarely comes in any walk of life without careful preparation and infinite pains. The racing stable had proved this. It often takes a turn of fortune to complete a successful issue, and as this history will, it is hoped, show, I have had my share of good fortune. I have, however, always been able to exploit any luck that came my way to its full advantage, because I have taken infinite pains to lay my plans in advance. Another lesson, also learned on the race-course, is that it is perhaps more productive to assume an attitude of imbecility rather than to pretend vigorous competency. The former conceit may succeed: where the latter never will.

Our little mess of four, as soon as Scudamore and Steevens arrived, became a very popular corner of the camp. I profited by my messmates' intimate acquaintance with the Sirdar's Army. I now discovered the social value in those many cases of stores at which I had looked askance.

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Scudamore was a superb caterer. Not only had he beer and sparkling wines, but he had an ice machine as well. Only those who have experienced a desert throat, or read Steevens' inimitable essay on thirst, can realize what iced laager means in the Soudan in August. Steevens, too, understood the peace of mind that comes with good living. His boxes had been made up by some Piccadilly firm, and clear turtle soup in jars and the best that Périgord can tin came toppling over on to the sand.

During the stay at Atbara the Mess never dined less than eight. One of the most frequent guests was Winston Churchill, who, though attached for duty to the 21st Lancers, seemed to prefer the Correspondents' corner to his own bivouac.

The Press Censor was Major Wingate,[1] the Sirdar's Chief of Intelligence and trusted friend. Wingate was a patient and friendly Censor.

In due course the Sirdar moved his Army southwards up the Nile. Part of it was conveyed up stream in boats, the mounted units marched. The Correspondents accompanied these latter.

During the march up the Nile I came to know my messmates better. No one could fail to be attracted to little Scudamore with his brilliant fund of reminiscences and cheery optimism. It was then easy to forgive his harmless conceits in dress and deportment. I became particularly attracted to Steevens, who, once you knew him and he knew you, was a lovable friend. During those hot marches, followed by cool and delightful nights, I cemented with this great genius a friend-

[1] Now Sir Reginald Wingate.

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ship that lasted until eighteen months later, his gallant spirit faded away in beleaguered Ladysmith.

I made several of the marches in company with Winston Churchill. The 21st Lancers had a down on this ambitious young subaltern, who had been attached to them for the campaign. In order to mark this displeasure some one in authority was small-minded enough to put the future Minister in charge of the Officers' Mess caravan, which consisted of an overladen mule and two donkeys. Far from being chagrined at this duty Churchill was amused. "These are little people," he said of his superiors as he urged the mess servants to keep the cortège moving. "I can afford to laugh at them. They will live to see the mistake that they have made!"

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CHAPTER VI

A GREAT OCCASION

WHEN the River Column reached Wad Hamed the Sirdar's concentration was complete. Wad Hamed was only six short marches from his goal.

The march of the Army upon Omdurman was an impressive sight. The six brigades in a double line of brigade masses ploughed through the desert, while on the left of this great phalanx the white gunboats, keeping pace with the plodding infantry, churned stealthily against the muddy current of the Nile. Far ahead, and just visible in the river scrub, were the cavalry and the camel corps. Thus the avenging Army came to Omdurman.

On September 1st the Sirdar's Army reached the Kereri Hills. As the cavalry gained these heights, the only indication of life was a vast flock of vultures, which in a fast increasing flight could be seen for miles, wheeling overhead. Some uncanny instinct must have warned them, otherwise how did they know that within twenty-four hours, let them come in their thousands, they would so gorge that they could not fly.

From the summit of Kereri Hill there stretches to the right an almost boundless view. To the left lay the Nile, not the Nile that the Force had known hitherto, but a Nile swollen and extended, so that

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the whole of the eastern prospect was one marshy sea. In front, and it was here that all eyes turned, glinting in the morning sun, appears the Mahdi's white-washed tomb, a beacon of blood-shed, and the Mecca of crime and anarchy in all that troubled land. Below the white monument, amid the haze, in a blue line of shadow nestled the fateful city of Omdurman. The full view of the city, however, was hidden by the rocky crest of Jebel Surgham, under the shadow of which, on the morrow, Mahdism was to perish.

The cavalry under Broadwood went forward to reconnoitre the city. A four miles trot brought this advance guard on to the low ridge rising inland from the city. In a moment every glass was focussed on Omdurman. As the Infidels appeared upon the sand dune, the great Ombeya was sounded in the city. The strident sounds of its quavering note and the hoarse patter of the war-drums droned sullenly across the blazing desert. The answer to the summons was instantaneous, for as ants leave a disturbed gallery, so did the white jibbah-clad warriors teem out of Omdurman and form into masses on the plain below. They made five distinct legions of infantry. Each cohort had an immense frontage, and was of considerable depth. The intervals between the masses were filled with horsemen. Both flanks were covered by a similar horde of mounted men.

Suddenly the masses began to move. On they came to do battle with the Infidel, waving countless standards, and chanting some war-song to the raucous rhythm of the drum. It was a wonderful

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vision. It almost mesmerised the onlookers. The pace at which the savage horde pressed forward, the uncouth discipline that held them in their formations was so unexpected that Broadwood with his six squadrons of cavalry came within an ace of being cut off by the impetuous advance.

In the meantime the Sirdar's Army had gone into camp at Agaiga on the banks of the Nile. It looked as if the Khalifa's Army was on the move to settle the business out of hand. The alarm sounded. The troops turned out. The Dervishes never persevered. They withdrew back to Omdurman, reserving their energy for the morrow, which being a Friday, was a day propitious to the Moslem.

Few of those who slept in Agaiga Camp that night will forget their feelings. They knew that the Dervish host was lying on the other side of Jebel Surgham. The cavalry had seen enough to know that at any moment we would be at grips with the Khalifa's countless spearmen. As the masses of these jibbah-clad fanatics had been so huge, it is not to be wondered at that many in camp were filled with apprehension.

The Sirdar's 20,000 men lay, with their backs to the silent Nile, compromised to take battle at the spear-points of the hordes which outnumbered them at the lowest computation in the ratio of four to one. All that Kitchener had stood, naked in its strength or its weakness, on the banks of the water-way—the silent mocking Nile. If victorious, she was the Sirdar's friend; if beaten, his most relentless enemy.

Spies reported that Wad Helu, the Khalifa's

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generalissimo, intended to attack Agaiga during the night. This is what Kitchener most feared. In the darkness an avalanche of spearmen might have succeeded, where in daylight the rifle would have stopped them. The Sirdar, therefore, sent counter-spies to inform the enemy that the British would advance to the attack during the night. Thus the rival armies lay in the darkness each waiting upon the other.

I myself had little time to concern myself with the hopes and fears that pervaded the camp. There was much to be done in camp. On occasions such as these, *Reuter's* maw for information is rapacious. The Sirdar's native levies on the far side of the river had been engaged. The gunboat flotilla had steamed up stream and shelled the city, while William's howitzer battery had been emplaced on Tuti Island. Recent rain had rendered the field wires inoperative. The Sirdar was sending a steamer down to the nearest telegraph post and Wingate would receive Press messages up to nightfall. By the time the messages were handed in I was so dog-tired that I almost fell asleep over my dinner, and as soon as it was over, rolled myself up in my blankets and slept as soundly as if there had never been a Dervish in the world.

At daybreak on September 2nd the friendly Arabs picketing Jebel Surgham sent in information that the Dervishes had broken camp and were moving down upon the British Zereba. I rode out with a squadron of 21st Lancers sent forward to reconnoitre. The squadron could go no farther than Jebel Surgham, as the Dervishes were already at its base. As soon as the Lancers occupied the

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ridge they saw that the Khalifa's Army was the same huge host that had been seen the day before. The only difference was that in the early morning light it seemed if anything to be more numerous. It was now advancing in full panoply of savage array. The whole desert seemed to be moving. There must have been any total up to 80,000 men. As the horde advanced, the long white lines stretched from east to west over a frontage of four miles. Drums and horns now there were none, but the lines moved rapidly, chanting a musical appeal to Allah. Banners and standards there were in hundreds. Behind the serried front were two huge masses of men, marshalled under an array of white standards. These were evidently some special Reserve. As the palpitating mass found the direction of the camp it seemed to deploy to some order of command, and it shot out two enveloping horns of warriors, while in the far distance a great cohort detached itself and swooped northwards to the Kereri Ridge.

Having seen this much, I cantered back to camp and took up a position upon a little knoll in the centre of the Zereba. Exactly at half-past six the deployed enemy showed over the brow of the ridge to the left of the Zereba. Almost immediately the mass had breasted the rise and came into view along the entire front.

This was a sight never to be forgotten, and for a moment every man in the Zereba held his breath. The tops of the banners had first appeared, a few seconds later the white-vested men themselves surged into sight and with one impulse advanced steadily, still droning out their

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slogan in quavering unison. *At twenty minutes to seven* the Sirdar gave the order. The first gun opened and the massacre began. Such riflemen as the Khalifa had opened fire when the camp burst upon their view. Then the range had been impossible; but as the mass closed down to within a 1,000 yards their shots began to reach the Zereba, and for a quarter of an hour the centre of the camp was lively with bullets.

Little had these savage warriors realized that this world possessed a machinery of death such as was now turned upon them. On they came, a serried mass of patchwork jibbahs, chanting their song of blood that promised death and mutilation to the Infidel invaders. No one knew how many riflemen the Khalifa had, and it was not until their vanguard diligently searched the target that the riddle was solved. Their enveloping line became fringed with smoke. So thickly did it come that for the time being it masked the advancing hordes. But mediæval methods and obsolete arms have no place in the lists of modern war. The life of the Dervish fire was but momentary, for no masses in the world, unsupported, could have lived in the face of the terrific tornado of magazine fire that now opened from the Zereba.

A matter of but 700 yards now separated the combatants. At the first sustained burst of fire the Dervish mass seemed to falter and check, and then, just as the waters heap before a heavy and sudden squall, so heaped these patchwork jibbahs. In vain did mounted Emirs exhort their followers to charge: useless was the individual valour of the few, who, raising the green banner

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of Islam on high, struggled forward: futile the one attempt which the dauntless horseman made: abortive the spasmodic surges in which the whole mass tried to regain its lost momentum. The steady stream of lead swept them away so surely that no man might stand upright for half a dozen seconds. The carnage was frightful. The skyline became a seething mass of mutilated, struggling men and horses. Some planted standards only to wither with them under the devastating fire: others, drunk with fanaticism or terror, hurled themselves forward to inevitable death. The bulk could stand no more. They turned and fled in panic from the scene. By a *quarter past seven* the Sirdar had broken the back of Mahdism.

As soon as the Dervish Army had committed itself to its inevitable fate, I had left the knoll in the centre of the camp and walked down to the front of the Zereba held by the Cameron Highlanders. I had seen the Sirdar and his Staff move down to that point.

The Sirdar sat stolidly upon his horse, and at this period of the day no expression upon his face gave evidence of any emotion. I watched him closely. The only evidence of what he must really have felt was in the many short sharp questions which he shot incessantly at the various members of his Staff. It seemed strange to see him there watching alertly the climax to his twelve years of patient contriving, while under his horse's nose the British soldier, the coping-stone of his realized ambition, was dropping his red-hot rifle and calling to the reserves to pass up their cool pieces.

It has been my invariable practice, on occasions

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such as these, always to have some part of a message ready for any emergency in dispatch that may arise. When the lull came, I sat down behind the Camerons, and their almost melting rifles, and began to prepare a message. Steevens, who was on horseback, came up as I sat writing. "Well done," he said. "I could not do that. They have shot Frankie Rhodes!"

Notes of the first phase of the engagement were exchanged, and then my half-written telegram had to be hurriedly put away. The Sirdar had ordered the infantry to advance in echelon of brigades from the left. His object was to place his troops between the city of Omdurman and the broken Dervishes. Military historians may perhaps argue that the move was premature, and that the Sirdar should have waited for fuller information before he left the Zereba. These considerations, however, form no part of my narrative.

The brigades began to move out, and those on the right had to cross the corpse-strewn area from which fortunate residue of Dervishes had just been swept. Two excited Correspondents, thinking that the battle was over, trotted out into the shambles. Immediately in front of them arose the figure of a gaunt, grey-bearded Dervish who menaced them with a shovel-headed spear. One of the Pressmen was off like a streak of lightning. The other, a heavy man, was riding a small pony of uncertain gait. This pony, shying at the corpses, impeded rather than accelerated the flight his rider so urgently desired so that that halting Dervish with the terrific spear gained ground. The pursued Pressman made a valiant effort to

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disengage a ponderous revolver, which he eventually discharged somewhat erratically in the direction of Jebel Surgham. It looked as if the feeble Dervish would consummate a tragedy with his dying gasp when suddenly a mounted officer dashed out and dispatched the tottering greybeard. This episode took place in full view of the advancing Army. The officer who intervened was awarded the Victoria Cross, Lord Kitchener, in his covering dispatch, maintaining that by his act he had at least "saved the life of one camp-follower."

As the troops moved into the area it was soon evident that the action was in no wise over. While the men advanced, not only wounded, but many unwounded, jumped to their feet and in sheer desperation flung themselves forward with levelled spears. They had no appreciation of the ethics of quarter; none was asked and at that period none could be given. In fact, so vicious were these fanatics that they would feign death until a column had passed and then would rise and stab the soldiers in their backs. Even the sorely stricken, craving a drink of water, would attempt the life of the hand that tendered succour.

Suddenly the firing crashed out again. The battle had broken out afresh. I hastened towards Jebel Surgham. I felt that from its summit I would have the best view of the final issue. Before I reached the foot of the hill I had to cross a little ravine. In the dip of this ravine I seemed to be absolutely alone. The sensation was curious. It seemed strange to be apart in the centre of an area in which a hundred thousand men were

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engaged in the sanguinary business of human slaughter. Then I suddenly realized that I was not alone. Out from behind a boulder arose a jibbah-clad *mulazim* armed *cap-à-pie*. I fumbled for my weapon. As I drew it, the Dervish was upon me. Instead of using his villainous spear and finishing this story here, the *mulazim* threw down his weapons, and cried, "La, la," by which I understood that he was as disinclined to a personal combat as I was myself. It was not only the terrific heat of the sun that bathed me in a sudden flood of perspiration as I relieved the Dervish of his sundry armaments.

When, with my Dervish clinging to my stirrup leather, I reached the top of Jebel Surgham, I found that the battle had reopened all along the line. It was evident that after the first clash the Khalifa's forces had reformed in the desert. From Surgham I witnessed the final annihilation of the Khalifa's bodyguard. This was a cohort, the men of which at least knew how to die. They were now caught in a hollow by the cross-fire of two brigades. These bold spirits had rallied round the great black flag, the personal insignia of their Chief. With this in their midst they moved forward towards the corner of death, in spite of the withering sleet of lead which furrowed the desert round them.

At first this *corps d'élite* round their Satrap's banner was a mass of several thousands strong: it ever struggled onwards, horsemen shouting and waving their spears aloft, footmen firing their Remingtons with frenzied vigour. It dwindled rapidly, leaving behind it a track of white jibbahs

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as white as that of an ocean steamer's wake. From thousands its numbers melted to hundreds, and yet undaunted the survivors maintained their onward march, while shrapnel and bullet whittled them away. At last they could stand the blast no longer: they halted and quivered. Then with magnificent abandon the few remaining members of the house of Taasur, the Khalifa's own kith and kin, gathered themselves together, and urging their horses forward made one last splendid dash to reach the death-dealing line. Futile effort: they rode to magnificent failure—to certain death. One after the other they were swept away until only three remained, clad in Crusader's mail, to rein in, turn and gallop from the field. There remained by the Khalifa's sinister standard but a knot of dying stalwarts. These had planted the symbol in the sand, and elected to die beside it. This was the end: within the area of that flag's final halting-place were heaped the shattered remains of four hundred dauntless savages.

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CHAPTER VII

A RISKY DELIVERY

LEAVING Jebel Surgham, and having handed my prisoner over to an officer of the 13th Soudanese, I made my way in the direction of the British Brigade that was already in movement towards Omdurman. I knew the Sirdar was with it. I wished to keep as near to his Staff as possible. On my way I met Slatin Pasha. As we trotted along together, we overtook a curious group. A small Arab boy was leading a donkey, and at the same time holding a stout Dervish on its back who was grievously wounded. Slatin at once perceived that the Dervish was a man of importance. He rode up to him, and I have never seen the expression of a man's face change so magically. Slatin's expression became ferocious: he drew back his lips like a snarling wolf. What he said the writer does not know, but the boy let the Dervish go and he rolled to the ground.

It was the Emir Osman Asrak, one of the most fiendish and bloodthirsty of the Khalifa's entourage. Slatin, during his years of bondage in the Khalifa's courtyard, had suffered countless brutalities from this human fiend. It seemed almost a disposition of Providence that he should have been present at the final act of requital. Whether Osman Asrak recognized Slatin, I cannot say; he

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was sorely stricken, and he rolled from the donkey's back to expire miserably in the sand at the hands of a passing Soudanese soldier whom Slatin summoned to bayonet him. I have the beads that were round Osman Asrak's neck to this day.

When we reached the Sirdar he was with Lyttelton's Brigade, which was already partially barring the way of the routed Dervish army to Omdurman. The battle in this part of the now scattered field, however, was over and the flying Dervishes could be seen streaming into the desert. The Sirdar sat watching anxiously for his cavalry to complete the business. He watched in vain, the 21st Lancers had charged themselves to a standstill, while Broadwood had fallen back 6 to 8 miles down Nile.

Meanwhile the Khalifa's black flag had been brought to the Sirdar. He took one last survey of the horizon, and then at a quarter to eleven, by my watch, turned to Rundle, his Chief of Staff, and said, " The whole line will advance ! "

A bugler took up and passed on the call, and the victorious Army, British and Egyptian, pursued the broken enemy into the Western desert.

The pursuit of the infantry could not, in the circumstances, be carried far ; for, now that the enemy was broken and in flight, the immediate occupation of Omdurman was of first importance. Column of route was almost immediately ordered and the leading brigade redirected upon the city.

At midday the army halted at the Samba Nullah, which is in the environs of Omdurman. The heat was abnormal, and everyone was

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thankful for such shade as could be secured at the resting-place.

Having gleaned such details as I was able of the dramatic clash which the 21st Lancers had with the Dervishes, and of Macdonald's *mauvais quart d'heure*, I completed my half-written telegram, and finding Wingate in a receptive mood asked him to pass it. The Censor at first demurred, saying that there would be no opportunity for us to dispatch messages until the following day. The Sirdar had arranged that a steamer should go down the Nile that evening with his own official dispatch: but that no Press telegrams were to be sent until the following morning, when another steamer would go north.

I suggested that the message might just as well be passed at once, as a very avalanche of telegrams would be submitted that evening and it would save the Censor's time to finish with this one now. Wingate saw the point and passed the message.

At three in the afternoon the Sirdar resumed the march upon Omdurman. The city is built for several miles along the left bank of the Nile. Its northern extremity in those days was but a straggling suburb. The farther south you went the more condensed became the maze of square mud buildings. As the Sirdar and his Staff rode forward behind the advance guard, he might have been entering a city of the dead, so silent and deserted was the way. Nothing could be seen but the flitting figures of the Soudanese advance guard as they appeared at the alley cross-ways. For about two miles the force moved forward

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OMDURMAN, SEPTEMBER, 1898.



THE ENTRANCE TO THE MAHDI'S TOMB, AFTERWARDS RAZED IN ORDER TO OBLITERATE THE MEMORY OF THE MAHDI.

[A pathetic interest attaches to this photo—the horse tethered to the rail was that of Captain "Freddie" Roberts, V.C., the only son of the great Field-Marshal, who was killed two years later at Colenso.]



A CORNER OF THE KHALIFA'S PRIVATE COURTYARD.

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amid this oppressive silence until a walled inner village was reached.

A wooden gate was flung open and there issued forth, surrounded by a knot of men, an ancient greybeard, riding on a donkey and carrying a white flag. This group came hesitatingly towards the Sirdar, who had now joined the advance guard, and Slatin Pasha recognized in the old Arab the Emir of the Suburbs. His mission was peace, and dismounting from his donkey he seized the Sirdar's hand and covered it with kisses.

In a moment, when the hidden watchers saw that their missioner was not destroyed, the city of Omdurman came back to life. Every cranny, every alley, every lane produced a torrent of joyful inhabitants. Men, women and children came pouring out from the houses in a great exultant stream. The men, raising their hands above their heads, hailed the Sirdar as their deliverer, even though the majority of them were fresh from the battlefield, and ill-concealed their morning's occupation, in the jibbahs they had turned inside out. The women made the way hideous with their chirruping whistle of exultation, and they swarmed so close to the victors that gentle force had to be used to keep them back. Men there were in hundreds, but the women were in their thousands. Amid this stirring movement the Sirdar pressed on towards the citadel.

All was not yet over, for in the Khalifa's quarter the great Ombeya was still calling the stalwart to arms. The vast majority of the Dervishes, however, had changed the order of their fealty when they changed their coats.

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With the clearing of the Citadel, the occupation of the Khalifa's dwelling and the release of his countless prisoners, this day of excitements drew to its close.

It was no simple matter to find the way back to the main body. The fall of night settled upon the blood-washed city with uncanny suddenness. The moon had not yet risen. As darkness came spasmodic firing broke out in the Southern City. The black infantry of the Sirdar's Army were taking a soldier's licence in this fallen town. Hunting in groups, they were dealing with the Dervishes, who, under cover of darkness, came sneaking back from the battlefield.

I made my way to where the bulk of the Army impedimenta had been thrown down to pass the night. There was no hope of finding home or baggage. It was just a matter of each doing the best he might for himself. Fortune favoured me as I stumbled upon two old Indian friends, namely Churcher and Wilson, who had the Royal Irish Fusiliers Maxim. In the Maxim limber was food and drink. I can never repay that debt.

In the little open space where the Maxim had *outspanned*, the Sirdar also had his bivouac. He and his Staff appeared to be no more comfortably quartered than were the rest of the Army. One by one the majority of the Newspaper Correspondent's dragged their weary frames to the vicinity of the Headquarters' bivouac. Dead-beat as they were, they gallantly tried to do their duty by their papers.

Never have I witnessed a more pathetic sight than the picture presented by those penmen, lying

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prostrate in the inky darkness, trying to reproduce the stirring incidents of the day by the light of guttering candles. Even if the surroundings of the bivouac had not been against them, sheer physical fatigue had rendered their brains inoperative. Then it was that I could congratulate myself that I had finished during the midday halt all the writing that I intended to do that day.

The physical strain was not confined to the Pressmen's bivouacs. By the Headquarters' lamp the Sirdar was lying on his back, with his head pillowed on his clasped hands, dictating his dispatch, which Wingate was laboriously committing to paper—that dispatch which all England was breathlessly awaiting.

Myself, fighting a physical weariness that well-nigh overcame me, I lurked in the shadow, and observed each movement at the Sirdar's bivouac. I was able to get speech of Jimmy Watson, who told me that a steamer was ready at the river bank hard by, to start downstream to the first *étape* cable office, the moment the Sirdar's dispatch was finished. I recalled the fact that Wingate had warned me that the steamer for the Press messages would not be released until the following day. My own vital message, already passed and sufficiently complete, burned in my pocket. Would it be possible to get it on the waiting steamer with any chance of it being handed in at the telegraph office? No officer dare touch it. Besides, the commanders of boats had strict orders to allow no one on board without a Staff-signed authority. It seemed hopeless.

At last the Sirdar's dispatch was finished. Win-

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gate had read it over to his Chief, who had signified his approval. How would the dispatch go down to the steamer? It was handed to an A.D.C.—Watson, if memory does not fail—my hopes sank, as I watched these developments from the shadow of the black darkness that held the city. Then I saw Watson summon a Soudanese orderly who likewise had been sitting in the shadow. The man had a leather satchel slung over his shoulder. Watson put the dispatch in the satchel. The orderly saluted and started off towards the river.

An impulse seized me. The brain works quickly in an emergency. It was a gambler's chance. Avoiding the circle of light thrown by the Sirdar's lamp, I hastened after the orderly, who had already disappeared into the darkness.

"Orderly," I shouted in a simulated tone of authority.

The man heard and stopped.

Presenting folded papers I said "Baboor," which is the local Arabic for "Steamer."

The orderly took the message, put it into his satchel, saluted, and passed away into the darkness.

The audacity and yet the simplicity of the affair for the moment took my breath away. I had "burnt my boats." Either I had brought off a great enterprise, or I would be faced with journalistic failure. I stumbled back to my bivouac with the Irish Fusiliers, and as my physical resistance immediately gave out, I fell asleep, caring little whether the "boats were burned" or not.

In point of fact the message was delivered and

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passed over the Eastern Telegraph Company's cable immediately after the Sirdar's official dispatch. I resolved never to tell a soul the means by which my message was so early on the wires until I retired from the profession of journalism. From this resolve I never deviated. The story is told for the first time here.

On the following day the Sirdar moved his Army out of Omdurman proper. The stench within the city was unbearable. The camp followers sorted themselves out and established a pleasant little Mess in one of the suburbs near the Nile. Events followed each other with amazing rapidity. The Sirdar, with that genius of his which was part cynicism and part a subtle knowledge of human nature, held a memorial service at the spot where Gordon fell. An avalanche of lead had swept Mahdiism away. There were no more military secrets. Kitchener now desired the co-operation of the Press. He would strike while the iron was hot. He would rebuild Khartum, and substitute for the demolished tomb of the Mahdi a great centre of education for the generation of Arabs whom his military genius had rendered orphan.

Then the Khalifa's old paddle-steamer *Bordein* came drifting down from the upper reaches of the Nile, with a story of white men established at Fashoda. Nickel-cased bullets were dug out of her rotten bulwarks. These were diagnosed as Lebel. The French were at Fashoda. This meant a delicate situation, and perhaps energetic measures that might not be palatable to public scrutiny. The Pressmen were a possible danger. This same cranky old steamer *Bordein* was pre-

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pared for them. They were offered no choice, but were just shipped down Nile. The cases of laager beer, the turtle soup and the produce of Périgord were jettisoned on the sandy banks of the Samba Nullah, and my pair of expensive, beautiful and swift-trotting camels, that should have taken my messages to the wire-head if a better means had not presented itself, were sold to General Hector Macdonald for a tithe of their value!

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CHAPTER VIII

THE HOLY LAND

THE voyage down the Nile in the old *Bordein* [1] was hardly a pleasant experience. To begin with, the crazy old hooker nearly turned turtle in the Shablukr Cataract. At sundown she tied up in a reach and the passengers spent the night fighting a myriad of mosquitoes. On the second day she made Atbara, where the journey north could be continued by train. There was no scheduled time-table, but a goods train started that evening and the majority of the Correspondents ensconced themselves in the open trucks. I and George Steevens made our servants spread our bedding at one end of a freight bogey. Rough as the accommodation was, the journey was not unpleasant. It was a perfect desert night. Fascinated by the mysterious charm of the grand waste on every side, and the starlit gloom above, we sat long into the night, talking of many things.

In one matter Steevens was truly prophetic. He gave his opinion on many men and manners

[1] The *Bordein* was one of General Gordon's river-steamers. Since the occupation of Khartum by the Dervishes she had been kept in such haphazard repair as could be effected by any prisoners from the North possessing a glimmer of repository handicraft. The marvel was that she held together and that her engines even functioned.

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and the subject turned upon Winston Churchill. I had related how, on the day after Omdurman, Churchill had come to me with a written account of the charge of the 21st Lancers, in which he had participated, and had offered the story to me on the condition that *Reuter's* description of the battle should mention his presence in that rather disastrous cavalry mêlée.

"Churchill will go far!" said Steevens, "he has every property that makes for success. He has blood, brain, rich friends behind him, and audacity. That is enough for the first lap. We have to see if he has judgment. His method of exploiting his publicity capital suggests at any rate considerable business capacity."

He spoke of Harmsworth, his then employer, in a friendly but not altogether convincing manner. Steevens was a man who could coldly peel the rind from off his dearest friend. The gloss of intimate association never vitiated his wonderful powers of discrimination. His love of diagnosis was so insistent, so cynical, that he would tear the unpleasant truth to the surface, without being conscious of the edges lacerated in the process. He strongly objected to the majority of his fellow-Correspondents, and had no epithets strong enough to express his contempt for the old original type of War-Correspondent whom he termed the "mutual admiration society."

At Wadi Halfa a Nile steamer was again the mode of conveyance. This brought the newspaper men to Assuan, and ordinary civilization. It also brought them into communication with their employers. Until Assuan was reached they were

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all unaware as to how their telegrams descriptive of the great battle had fared. It has already been related how the Sirdar sent a special boat with his own dispatch. A second boat started on the following morning which carried the messages which the Correspondents had written in such distress during the first night in Omdurman. The long and more detailed messages, however, had been carried by a later boat. By some mischance the first boat available for Press messages had stuck on a sand bank, so that the third boat passed it. It was currently suggested that the native pilot of the stranded boat had been bribed to pile up his vessel by a cunning Correspondent who himself had utilized the third steamer.

Be that as it may, there was considerable dejection and gnashing of teeth at Assuan. From this I was detached as I received a telegram from *Reuter*, which told me that indeed I had not "burned my boats" in vain, and that my description of the great massacre was in London on the afternoon following the day of battle. As I had dispatched no message by the boat that stranded, but a many-hundred-word cable by the third boat, Dame Fortune had certainly been on my side.

On arrival in London I presented myself at Old Jewry, and received a warm and eulogistic welcome from Herbert de Reuter, whose praise went so far as to say that his Agency had never before been served more efficiently in the Field.[1]

[1] A statement to this effect appeared in the Company's Annual Report to its shareholders.

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At this interview no mention was made of permanent employment. As a matter of fact, I returned from the Nile even less enamoured of the calling into which I had drifted than I had been after my previous campaign. On the Indian Frontier I had felt as if I were part and parcel of the Army. In fact I had been allowed to do duty as a soldier on several occasions. Little or no restriction had been placed upon me, and all and sundry had welcomed me as an integral part of the undertaking. With the Sirdar's Army the position had been very different. Officially the newspaper Correspondents were tolerated but not welcomed. Individually, of course, my relations with my friends in both Armies had been pleasant enough. The Sirdar, wisely enough no doubt, had built up a wall between the medium of independent comment and his subordinates. This tended to an attitude of general distrust. This had irked me, and I made no further effort to exploit my introduction to Fleet Street.

Herbert de Reuter said, at parting, that he hoped that the Agency would soon find an opportunity to avail themselves again of my services. I was content to leave the matter at that.

The summons was not long delayed. A few days later came the request that I should accompany the German Emperor on his Pilgrimage through the Holy Land. This mission was breaking new ground. It seemed attractive. I accepted it, and found myself once more Eastward bound.

The Kaiser was due to start on his Pilgrimage

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from Haifa. Quite a regiment of English Correspondents gathered there to escort him on his way, and amongst them were some of my late colleagues from the War. The inimitable House of Thomas Cook & Son had arranged to cater for a Correspondents' Camp. I offer the suggestion that this experience made a lasting impression upon the management of that excellent concern. It is one thing to cater for a bevy of docile tourists, who are willing to be dragooned by Levantine interpreters, and quite another to attempt to control or please a party of journalists all of whom are travellers of independent thought and ideas, and the majority linguists.

I will never forget the first luncheon in the Correspondents' Camp at Haifa. Half-way through the meal an oily Syrian, disguised in *burnous* and butcher boots to simulate an Arab, entered the tent and rapped imperiously on the table. He then said: "At half-past two you will try your horses: at a quarter to three you will ride to . . ." No one ever knew where, for at this juncture he was taken by the scruff of the neck and flung out of the tent.

In view of all that has come to pass in Palestine during the past fifteen years a vignette of The Pilgrimage by the Ambitious German War Lord, who by his venture of 1914 has changed the whole of modern history, is perhaps worthy of record. Something of its portent must have been impressive at the time, to have encouraged the leading British and Continental papers to take so great an interest in it. Professing friendship for the Turks, the then undisputed masters

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of Syria and the Holy Land, the Germans had established by a peaceful method of infiltration a number of colonies in Syria and Palestine. There was a flourishing one at Haifa. These were a type of settlement of peculiar interest. The German pioneers had made themselves into little exclusive municipalities. Except in the matter of trade and agriculture, the inmates had little or no intercourse with the aborigines, and as little as possible with the Turkish Authorities. Except that their surroundings were entirely peaceful, they lived very much the lives apart that were led by the inmates of the stockaded fur-trading forts in the North-West of Canada. So much so, that they did not even transact their local business in the current coin of the country of their adoption, but on their own account issued " tokens " in lieu of currency.

With its church, its Burgomeister and its beer gardens, the colony at Haifa was just a little bit of provincial Germany transplanted bodily to the shores of the Mediterranean. I myself patronized the charming drinking bower of one Mr. Martin Pross, whose iced laager was a dreamlike palliative to the stress of the midday sun. These German colonies were all State-aided, and were part of a well-designed scheme in preparation for a future development, the earliest outcrop of which was the projected Baghdad Railway.

A visit to the celebrated Monastery on the summit of Mount Carmel brought me a hospitable invitation to a meal with the monks. The repast was truly wonderful, but to me it was

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rather spoiled by the vagaries of an unsavoury insect, which disported itself upon my host's neck, much to my uneasiness, but apparently without the slightest inconvenience to the Abbot himself.

The Correspondents' Mess, even apart from the dragoman difficulties, was not a very comfortable home. The family was ill assorted, and comprised, besides the English and Foreign representatives, two adventurous Dutch damsels, who were desirous of riding in the Emperor's train to the Christian Mecca. Even the restraining influence of their sex could not prevent the sour Charles Williams and the peppery Melton Prior from mutual recriminations, while the austere correctness and the best diplomatic manner of the dignified J. D. Bourchier of *The Times* was unable to pour sufficient oil upon these troubled waters.

Every one, therefore, was very glad when the *Hohenzollern* turned up and deposited its august pilgrims. The Kaiser rode, if not actually in the garb of a Knight Templar, at least with as much state, on the road to Jerusalem. Like the Templars he had an eye to plunder, and took the long route because it brought him to Cæsarea. In those days men said that he coveted Cæsarea if it were found to promise possibilities for a naval port.

Whatever the Kaiser's motives, the ride to the disestablished seaport played havoc with his unofficial camp followers. The animals and saddlery supplied to the tourists were sufficient guarantee of this. The adventurous damsels,

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who were introduced to horsemanship for the first time, fell exhausted by the way, and waited for the good Samaritans which tradition says are proverbially rare in these regions. The other amateur horsemen were not in much better state than their fair colleagues and came limping into camp on foot, also looking for someone to pour oil into their wounds. The dragomen spent their time in collecting the jettisoned clothes racks which in a fine vein of cynicism had been called horses.

After this first experience the remainder of the journey to Jerusalem was made by train.

It is hard to believe that the miserable old man, bearded and broken, who is now passing the evening of his life practically a prisoner, and potentially an outcast, at Doorn in Holland, is the same strenuous and theatrical Monarch who made a triumphal and almost blasphemous entry into Jerusalem at the beginning of the century. For that day Jerusalem the Golden was indeed Golden: but the gilt was German. Although the Sereskiet at Stamboul had pledged its credit to supply at least one battalion in the Holy City with new uniforms, yet even the fresh scarlet of their *tarbooshes* flashed rusty before the brilliant spit and polish of the Marine Guards of Honour from the *Hohenzollern*, while every German (and the town was singularly full of Germans), seemed for the occasion to be a Uhlan or Dragoon Officer of Reserve.

The Kaiser, although the gesture of his entry was intended to recall an episode in Christian history, had no intention that his first appear-

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ance in the holy precincts should be either lowly or unpretentious. The world had progressed by 2,000 years. The city walls had to be breached to make his appearance the more impressive. He rode at the head of a brilliant staff. He wore the white uniform of his Guard Cuirassiers with its gilded eagle casque, and his horse was *white*. To carry a double significance in his trappings, the magnificence of his glittering dress, all but the helm, was masked by a hooded cloak of white. This cloak was half *burnous* of the Arab, half mantle of the Knight Templar, while the breeze from time to time disclosed, upon the Kaiser's breast, the blood-red cross of the Crusader. A great multitude was gathered to witness the spectacle. Small urchins even climbed into the trees. Flowers and palm leaves strewed the pathway. Whether these effects were a spontaneous or a Staff-planned tribute, or whether a Nicodæmus was in the trees, I cannot say: but I can affirm that in my hearing no voice shouted " Hosanna."

It was, however, a well-staged theatrical display, and the memory of it is worth a smile if it is contrasted with the entry of the last Christian Conqueror of the Holy City. Field-Marshal Lord Allenby, in the simple khaki of a British General in 1918, slipped into its precincts almost unobserved.

To return to my own story. I found Jerusalem in those days a most depressing place. It seemed to uproot the beautiful picture-garden of childhood's imagination. In the Kaiser's train I visited all the places that my early Christian

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teaching had taught me to revere. Of all Jerusalem's monuments, tradition aside, I found the Blue Mosque the most elevating—I here narrowly escaped grievous assault by the bayonet of an Ottoman sentry, for having purloined a blue tile—while the least elevating were those places which should have been stimulating to the Christian belief. The beautiful story of childhood's imagination came down with a run, like a house of cards, when one came in contact with the sordid surroundings of the birthplace of Christianity and the more sordid manner in which this greatest story in the world was exploited for local gain.

The Kaiser's tour, after a visit to Damascus, ended at Beirut. I cannot leave Beirut without a reference to the Turkish gunboat. This gunboat had been moored to a buoy for countless years. A series of its captains, dunned to distraction by the shore sutlers who had financed them and fed their crews, had sold everything in the war vessel that was saleable. Even the shaft of the screw had passed into the possession of some Greek chandler or Syrian speculator. With the approaching visit of the Kaiser, the then captain of the gunboat was ordered from Stamboul, to put to sea to show the ordinary courtesy of the occasion and to escort the *Hohenzollern* into port.

The consternation of the Turkish captain can well be imagined. But it was the Sultan's own *irade*. That which must be obeyed. The missing screw shaft was beyond reclaim. In consultation with the local authority—altogether

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sympathetic local authority be it said—a suitable wooden spar was produced and fitted to the vessel in place of the screw shaft. All the assisting experts agreed that the spar would not take the strain: that it would break with the first revolutions. That did not matter. Herein one can gain a glimpse into the curious working of the Oriental mind. If the spar broke, the captain would be able, truthfully enough, to wire to Constantinople that, in obedience to orders, he had put to sea, but unfortunately his screw shaft had broken. No lie would have been served up to the Sultan, and no exposure of the true state of the vessel would be forthcoming. Then followed marvel upon marvel. The first marvel was that the local repository work ever fitted the spar, the second marvel that the spar actually took the strain and the gunboat waddled forward under steam. This latter *dénouement* was the most serious of all, as it imperilled the captain's own life and that of his entire crew. But the subtlety of the Oriental mind, if unfathomable, is also undefeatable. The captain stopped his engines, and ordered the carpenters to saw the spar *three-quarters* through. This being done, he started his engines again and the spar immediately severed. The tug that was standing by towed the gunboat back to its moorings, while the relieved captain was able to wire, truthfully, that he had put to sea but unfortunately had to be towed in because his screw shaft had suddenly snapped. Glory be to Allah the all-merciful!

From Beirut I returned to England at express

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speed, as I had received a cable from *Reuter* requesting my return without delay. Another mission was awaiting me.

Upon my arrival in London my interview with Herbert de Reuter became rather an amusing episode. The proposed mission was to West Africa, where some punitive operations were foreshadowed. I had now become a little instructed concerning the emoluments due to those who followed the sometimes hazardous calling of a Special Correspondent abroad. I had also heard of West Africa as the "white man's grave." I was quite prepared to undertake a mission to the West Coast, but I pointed out to Herbert de Reuter that I had now done my apprenticeship on "boy's pay" and proposed that in my future employment he should requite me with a "man's wage."

Herbert de Reuter did not hold the same view, and as no agreement was come by, I walked out of the Old Jewry office, fully resolved that I was finished with journalism. In this spirit I took a cab to Northumberland Avenue to the P. & O. Offices and engaged and paid for a passage back to India. It was to prove, however, a case of *l'homme propose, mais Dieu dispose.*

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CHAPTER IX

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

A FEW days after my final parting with Herbert de Reuter, his office forwarded to me a letter in an unknown hand. It was a short note from one C. F. Moberly Bell, of Printing House Square, in which it was suggested that if I thought that I might like to join the Staff of *The Times*, would I find it convenient to call and see the Manager of that great journal some day at about four in the afternoon. This was an unexpected development. In my wildest dreams I had never bethought me of *The Times* in connection with any scheme of my progression. I turned over in my mind *The Times'* Correspondents I had met. The haughty Younghusband in Chitral; the talented Colonel Hutchinson in Tirah; Colonel Frank Rhodes, man of the world wounded in the Soudan; Hubert Howard, youth of distinction and great promise, killed in the same campaign; Bourchier of the East, of mysterious intellect and diplomatic manner. I myself had no pretension to be classed with any of these. I argued, however, that no harm would be done in seeing the matter through. *The Times* seemed to be a top-hat affair, so I purchased one of the shiniest of its kind and thus came to Printing House Square.

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To those who are not familiar with *The Times* office, the approach was in 1898 a dismal progress. Such jauntiness of manner as I chose to affect was ironed out of me at a species of hurdle gate that barred the entrance. From behind a grille, a uniformed and bemedalled janitor demanded my business. He then, rather truculently, indicated an uneven desk in a corner, and directed me to fill up a form lying there. This form required answers to an array of printed questions. As I filled them up I felt the cold eye of the janitor upon me. Even after I had completed the voluminous record of *bona fides* that the form required, I was not permitted within the hurdle gate.

At last a sleek messenger arrived. This messenger was remarkable for the oiled surface of his hair and the voluminous sweep of his frock coat. I was led up a flight or two of stairs and then turned into a large dingy-looking room.

For the moment it seemed that the room was empty save for a roll-topped desk drawn across, where one would have imagined there would be a recess to hold a fire grate. Suddenly I became aware of a huge form raising itself from behind the rampart of the desk, and a pair of beady eyes, observing me intently from their setting in a massive and rather ill-kempt head. The severe expression that accompanied this first scrutiny gave place to a pleasant, if rather mechanical smile, as the Manager of *The Times* enveloped my hand in his own giant member. This was Moberly Bell, who whatever his faults, was always a force, and who was always a true friend

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to me during the many years of my association with him.

The interview did not last long, but long enough for Bell to order a most outrageous brew of tea. The first sip of this noisome mess so offended my sense of taste that I put the cup down and said, "That if employment on *The Times* was conditional upon a stomach able to digest such tea, there was no necessity to prolong the interview!" This seemed to please Bell immensely and he again rose to his great height, put his hand encouragingly on my shoulder, and said, "You will hear from us in a day or so; in the meantime, if you have any record of your journalistic crimes, send them along to me!" I have often wondered if that hideous brew of tea was a device. Bell always maintained that it was not, but I am not so sure, even now, that he did not dissemble.

I forwarded such newspaper cuttings of my work as youthful writers usually collect, and within the week was again summoned to *The Times* office. Bell received me with the curt announcement that he thought that in time I would do, and then turned me over to a rather fussy assistant, bidding him instruct me as to my duties. My instructor was delightfully vague, his only tangible suggestion being that I should come to the office one evening about 10 p.m. and see Commander Charles Robinson, who was the Naval and Military Editor. Then, I presumed by way of impressing me, he entered upon a long dissertation over some reputed journalistic feat of his own, which he led me to

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believe had permanently established his own reputation in Fleet Street.

I was then taken back to Bell, who informed me that my appointment would begin from January 1st, 1899. Bell then added that he had better take me down to see ——. I did not catch the name. Bell himself took me downstairs, and brought me into a room where a middle-aged bald little man was sitting at a very comfortable writing table.

He greeted me, and, as Bell withdrew, invited me to sit down with him in front of the fire. He was full of ideas on military subjects, and it was not long before I opened out quite freely on my own impressions of modern war. Then the little man said, "We are very glad to have you. We admire the work you have done for *Reuter* very much. You will join us as our Second War Correspondent, but I can tell you in confidence that it will not be long before you will have first place. You will, while you are not on active service, receive a lower scale of pay than when you are abroad. You are a young man, and if you serve us well, at the end of your time you will qualify for a pension. I am very glad to welcome you to *The Times*."

On returning to Bell, I discovered that I had just received the initial blessing of the late Mr. Arthur Walter, the chief proprietor of *The Times*. With the exception of the pension, everything fell out as Mr. Walter promised. Within a few days the late E. F. Knight, who was then Senior War Correspondent, resigned his post on *The Times* and joined the Staff of the *Morning*

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Post. I have no doubt that if the proprietorship and management of *The Times* had not changed hands towards the end of the period of my service, that Mr. Walter's engagement as to the pension would have, in due course, been carried into effect. Mr. Walter stood for the old and solid basis that made the paper what it was in the days of its original greatness, and to which, after a lapse, it has again returned. Twelve years later, when the editorial staff of my time stood at Arthur Walter's graveside, one of the most distinguished members of that body turned away, and with a catch in his voice, said, "We have buried *The Times.*"

I have been fortunate enough to see the resurrection.

I soon found that there was little occasion for me to cock my hat over my new appointment. In those days the doors of Printing House Square were not readily flung open to the new-comer. The aspirant for consideration had first to prove his worth.

However, as the purpose of this book is only to describe the journalistic deliveries that I was called upon to attempt, I will pass over my periods of inactivity and confine my narrative to my foreign services to the journal. Except for a short and abortive mission to Egypt in the spring of 1899, there were no circumstances, other than Manœuvres in Ireland, that necessitated the employment of a Special Representative.

Throughout the summer affairs in South Africa had been drifting towards war. Bell, the optimist, had set his face against the possibility

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of a rupture with the Transvaal Government. He, like Napoleon in his later years, was one of those men who tried to believe that things would not happen, simply because it was inconvenient to him that they should happen. It was distasteful to him to spend the money that a war of any magnitude must drag from the paper's resources. Then came the announcement that troops had been ordered from India to South Africa and that Sir George White had been appointed to command the British troops in Natal. Bell's hand was forced, and I was ordered to South Africa forthwith. Bell's instructions were of the slightest: "Go to Natal, and get into communication with Monypenny of the *Johannesburg Star*; he is our Correspondent in South Africa!" was the wording of the note that conveyed my orders.

I learned in the Office, but not from Bell, that a week earlier a young and enterprising member of *The Times* Foreign Department had already left for South Africa. This was L. S. Amery, now the Secretary of State for the Colonies in Mr. Baldwin's Government, who then had instructions to deal with the political aspects of the situation as they arose in the Cape Peninsular.

I sailed in the *Tantallon Castle* from Southampton about the middle of September. On board were Sir George White and his Staff, and a number of Special Service Officers. This group included many soldiers who were destined for great futures in the World War fifteen years later. Amongst the Field Officers were Sir Beauchamp Duff, who, as Commander-in-Chief in

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India, was destroyed professionally in 1916 by the affairs of Kut and Mesopotamia: Sir Ian Hamilton, who commanded the Gallipoli adventure: Lord Rawlinson, who was to be one of the ablest and most successful of the British Army Commanders in France, and to meet his death as the result of an operation while Commander-in-Chief in India: Sir E. Altham, who adminstered the Lines-of-Communication in the Mediterranean during the Great War: Sir R. Haking, destined to be my own Corps Commander during the most critical period of the fighting in France in 1918: Sir David Campbell, then a Captain in the 9th Lancers; and many others of junior rank just placing their feet upon the first rung of the ladder of military distinction, that was destined to lean so favourably for soldiers during the next two decades. Many, alas! were to fall by the way. But that is war!

The first night in the Channel brought us a memorable and very remarkable spectacle. We passed in mid-Channel one of Nelson's old wooden ships of the line. It was the *Foudroyant* being towed by a tug to the port of her final moorings. It is something to have seen such a relic of the Navy's magnificent past history at sea.

It would be hard to describe the state of excitement in which the passengers on the *Tantallon Castle* awaited the pilot, as the steamer arrived at Table Bay. There was no wireless in those days, and we had had no news since we had left Madeira. Was it war?

"Not yet, but very near!" the pilot cried as he clambered up his rope ladder. Officers in

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uniform had put off with dispatches for Sir George White and with them came H. G. Gwynne, *Reuter's* Correspondent. He was a personal friend of Colonel Sir Edward Ward, who was with us, and had come to greet him. I had heard much of Gwynne from Scudamore and Maud. Gwynne had preceded me as *Reuter's* representative in the Soudan. He had then been sent to Pekin, and from North China had been hurried to Cape Town to take charge of *Reuter's* service. Later in the campaign, I was destined to see much of the future Editor of the *Morning Post*. The news he gave was to the effect that there seemed to be little hope of any amelioration of the existing deadlock with President Kruger's Government, and that the situation was hourly becoming more aggravated by the treatment of the Johannesburg Uitlanders by the Boers.

The first duty of a Special Correspondent when he arrives in a new country is to make certain of his means for telegraphic communication. Having visited the offices of the Eastern Telegraph Company, I went to Government House. Here I found the Duke of Westminster, who was on Lord Milner's Staff. He presently took me in to see the High Commissioner. Lord Milner was wearing his grey face—many will recognize that expression—and he readily admitted that the situation was as grave as it was possible to be without an actual breaking off of relationship. His luminous eyes left the impression with me that, diplomatically, the case was hopeless. As I rose to go the High Commissioner

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possibly remembering his own journalistic days, and wishing to help me, said:

"We have stopped the mail steamer *Scot* at East London for White. I should catch her, if I were you. It will perhaps save you a week that you will find important!"

This was an unexpected piece of news. There was not overmuch time to book places in the night mail that connects Cape Town with East London. The train, when it started, was very full, for not only was Sir George White's Staff on board, but a crowd of excited Pretoria Boers and Hollanders anxious to get back to the Transvaal and Free State thronged the corridors.

Needs must when the devil drives, and the devil is an exacting taskmaster to the War Correspondent when the public is athirst for news. I, together with Maxwell of the *Standard*, who had also been a passenger on the *Tantallon Castle*, succeeded in securing actually the last vacant places on the train.

Apart from the interest in travelling across a new country, the journey through Cape Colony was not of exceptional moment. Every halt that the mail train made, naturally, brought those rumours of war and war's excursions, which are peculiar on the interested frontiers to the period of tension that precedes an outbreak of hostilities. Concrete evidences of the state of affairs in the Transvaal were found in the trains that passed the Up Mail. These were literally overhung with Cornish miners fleeing from Johannesburg. These extraordinarily weak-kneed creatures were whining like

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frightened children. They complained that when they had left the train at Kronstad in the Free State, the Boers had even sjamboked them back into their compartments.

Peace, though a very strained peace, still existed when the *Scot* arrived at Durban. I wasted no time in the seaport, and Maxwell and I started immediately for Pietermaritzburg. At Cape Town I had been informed that Monypenny, *The Times* Correspondent in South Africa, was in Maritzburg, so I wired to him to secure accommodation. This accommodation was poor; it was just a corner in a penthouse adjoining an institution called Doig's Hotel. The newcomer at that period had to be content with any sort of hutch. Maritzburg was full to the overflowing with refugees of all classes from the Transvaal and with the oddments of a mobilizing Army. These two tides met at this town, and swamped the normal housing capacity.

Monypenny, like G. W. Steevens, was a man who, upon first acquaintance, was prone to give a wrong impression. A stiff shyness sheltered itself under what has been aptly termed the "Oxford manner." Once this wore through, you found beneath it the charm of the wise and witty Irishman. From Monypenny I was able to learn something of the frenzied arrangements which Bell had made to retrieve the want of preparation for which his own optimism had been responsible. Already several free lances with nominal authority from *The Times* were infesting South Africa. This was one of the faults in Bell's administrative powers. Any

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irresponsible man might present himself at *The Times* office and promise to go to some scene of action at his own expense, and the lure of a service that might prove of value, and that would certainly be economical carried the otherwise shrewd Manager away. The difficulties which this unbusiness-like system imposed upon those who carried the paper's responsibilities were infinite.

Monypenny himself was negotiating for a commission in the Imperial Light Horse, a Volunteer Regiment then being raised in Pietermaritzburg from the best elements of the Johannesburg refugees. In a vague fashion, he believed, in spite of my assurance to the contrary, that he would be able to serve in the dual capacity both *The Times* and his own patriotic inclinations.

Doig's hash-house was destined to serve me well. There I met Adin Coats, a young English refugee from the Transvaal. Coats, who had been managing a store in the Transvaal for some years, had come to Maritzburg with the intention of enlisting in some Irregular Corps. He volunteered to come with me as interpreter, guide and servant. Coats was a great find. He was one of those young Englishmen in whose blood was a strong infusion of those subtle qualities by which the adventurous elements of the nation have acquired the Empire. He was brave, resourceful, loyal, and both *The Times* and I, myself, owe him a debt of gratitude.

Ladysmith, at the foot of the mountainous mass that separates Natal from both the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, was clearly

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indicated as the best centre from which a Correspondent could operate. Having fitted myself out with horses and equipment, I hastened to the little dusty township which was destined to be my forced *pied-à-terre* for so many weary months. Maxwell, who had joined forces with me, accompanied me.

The train put us down at our destination early in the morning. The first man that I met on the platform was McCarthy, of the Gunners, an old and cheery friend of the race-course in India. He was Railway Staff Officer at Ladysmith, and at once produced a welcome breakfast.

It then became incumbent upon us to look for accommodation. This at first seemed a hopeless task, as Ladysmith was as congested as Maritzburg. The Grand Hotel had not a niche to spare. Someone directed me to a Mrs. Haydon, who kept a boarding-house. It looked as if this quest would also be unsuccessful, as Mrs. Haydon, a tired, harassed-looking woman, seemed disinclined to extend her hospitality. In her indecision she asked one of her guests, to wit the magistrate of the place, to interview me. He was evidently better satisfied with me than had been the landlady, and accommodation was forthcoming. Thus it was that Maxwell and I came to live with Mrs. Haydon. Circumstances and the fortune of war so directed it that we stayed under her roof for nearly five months.

I had arrived in Ladysmith about four days before the actual outbreak of war. Sir George White's Headquarters were established there

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the same day with a detached brigade at the frontier village of Dundee. The latter force was distant from Ladysmith about forty miles. Among the first duties of a competent Correspondent when he joins an army is to make himself mobile. It is ideal when he can find a man like Coats to take all the trouble of commissariat and caravan off his hands. His next duty should be to so form his own estimate of the probable course that events will follow, that in the case of his own side being successful or the reverse, he may be able to communicate results with the least delay.

From the outset I was not happy about the situation of the Natal Field Force. I therefore determined to lay in three months' provisions for both men and animals. This could be *cached* at Ladysmith. It would serve, therefore, either as a reserve depot, if Sir George White was successful, or as an insurance against the stresses of a possible investment. A supply of tinned food was, therefore, laid in and Coats was entrusted with the purchase of forage for the horses. The latter was buried in Mrs. Haydon's garden. Later I had every reason to congratulate myself upon the foresight which prompted these precautions.

The life in Ladysmith during those few anxious days before the actual outbreak of war was strenuous. England was athirst for information. The Special Correspondents arrived apace. They included Colonel Frank Rhodes, in a pseudo-journalistic rôle, but really to vindicate his interest in South Africa: Bennett Burleigh,

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then in the zenith of his boisterous career, came careering over the Drakensberg Mountains, in a Cape cart four-in-hand, with a team of mules: Steevens and Maud, my old associates up the Nile, duly rallied to the tocsin that now sounded in Natal.

In those hectic pre-belligerent days there was little that was definite to be gleaned by the non-official observer. All that could be seen was a fevered haste to make Ladysmith into a vast emporium for military stores. I myself had already learned to rely upon my own deductions rather than to trust to any official information that might be supplied. Working by inference, I was inwardly perturbed at what seemed to me the evidences of a certain want of decision. Seven fine mounted units, of which four were regular cavalry regiments, all, with the exception of one regiment, were kept in Ladysmith. To my simple mind this seemed to be an invitation to the enemy.

This being so, I was not happy about the detached force at Dundee. It was too far removed to be supported from Ladysmith and too weak to hope to hold its own, if the reports of the Boer concentrations at Laing's Nek and Harrismith gave accurate numbers. A journey which I made with Sir Henry Rawlinson in an armoured train to Dundee confirmed me in this anxiety. An anxiety to which, at the time, I gave expression in the columns of *The Times*. I was so certain that this detached force was in jeopardy that I persuaded Monypenny, whose commission had not yet come through, to start at

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once for Dundee to be ready for any emergency there.

On October 9th Kruger issued the insolent ultimatum which was destined to bring the Dutch Republics into the British Empire. Putting aside the thousand and one camp rumours which passed from mouth to mouth, nothing definite was known in Ladysmith until the 11th, when the Harrismith mail train failed to return from the Free State. On the following morning three distant cannon shots were heard. These were signals from the Drakensberg Passes that the Orange Free State Commandoes had invaded Natal. On October 19th the Boers placed themselves between Dundee and Ladysmith. They captured a train at the Elandslaagte coal-mines.

On the day that the capture of the train was reported General Sir John French, with Colonel Douglas Haig as his Staff Officer, had arrived from England to command the cavalry. He was at once ordered to make a reconnaissance in the direction of Elandslaagte. This reconnaissance started late in the day, but it reached a bluff that overlooked the Elandslaagte coal-mines and station. The rain then fell heavily and for the purposes of reconnaissance obscured all vision. Two Germans, on patrol from the Boer Commando, however, were picked up by the 5th Lancers. They were two harmless little waiters from Johannesburg, quite innocent of military usage. They surrendered their Mausers with evident relief, and as far as their information went, accurately described the position and strength of the commando to which they belonged.

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When I returned to camp late that night I found Maxwell in possession of the great news that the detached Force at Dundee had won a victory at Talana Hill. It is true that it had been won at the price of Penn Symonds, its gallant Commander, who was mortally wounded.

It would be impossible to overstate the enthusiasm which the news of the Dundee success created in Ladysmith, or my personal satisfaction in the knowledge that the reluctant Monypenny had, on my advice, arrived in Dundee in the nick of time. The days of action had arrived. At Headquarters, Sir George White told me that he was sending French out in the morning in command of a mixed force definitely to clear up the Elandslaagte situation. This meant "boot and saddle" before daylight.

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CHAPTER X

A MODEL BATTLE

I NOW propose to describe my first important delivery to *The Times*. It is not my intention in the narrative of the many deliveries that it fell to my share to make to attempt the full and detailed description that I have given to this the first British success in the Boer War. Apart from its interest to me, as the origin of my first important message to *The Times*, the engagement at Elandslaagte has a very special niche of its own. In my whole experience of modern war—and I hope that the reader who follows these pages to their end will agree that my experience has been varied and wide—it is the only example of a completed operation that really approximated the *formula* for battle laid down at the time in our military text-books. It was a replica of the complete Aldershot Field Day of the period, in which all arms were expected to combine, and to function in a scheduled sequence.

To those who, in the tedious months of the Great War, have toiled in trenches; waited with inward blanching for "Zero"; "Gone over the top" and participated in a hundred fire fights, my description of this neat little battle may appear paltry. I would ask those of my readers who have experienced, suffered, and perhaps

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exulted in these things, to remember that I was still a young man on the threshold of a new career. That it seemed expedient to me, if I were to give truthful colour to the pictures that my employment enjoined me to paint, I should "mix my colours" by actual experience of the matter intended for my "canvas."

Also, in the days of which I am now writing, the business of a Correspondent in the Field enabled him to see for himself at least a panel of the events he had to chronicle. The Great War produced another order of things, and the War Correspondent was denied the liberty of movement and the choice of subject-matter that was possible in my time. Therefore, I may be forgiven if, in order to produce the realities of occasions that are lost, I have accorded more space to this incident than it probably deserves in its true perspective with the great battles that have come since, and with which the War against Germany, alas! has made most of us all too familiar. My main defence is that this volume does not pretend to be a military history. It is only my own personal story. I would, therefore, in my conceit, like those who read it to realize the relative contours of the labours, adventures, successes and failures of those of us who counted nothing of exhaustion, little of danger, provided we could supply the subscribers to our respective papers with an early and substantially correct description of the events we were called upon to chronicle. I can assure them that the accomplishment of this excellent intention was not often easy, and in some cases was most unpleasant. But when the

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grip of our duty held us, nothing deterred us, and no obstacle was too threatening for us not to attempt it.

I was up before daylight and with Coats rode out with the advance guard of French's reconnaissance formation. It was furnished by the Imperial Light Horse. The day was oppressively hot, as the weather was working up to the thunderstorm which broke later. Nothing was seen of the enemy until the plateau was reached which, 12 miles out from Ladysmith, overlooked the Elandslaagte coal-field.

As the advance guard topped the tableland it disturbed a bevy of Boers who were amusing themselves in the colliery and railway buildings. These scurried away, as fast as they could catch their ponies and whip them off, leaving behind half a dozen prisoners they had taken on a captured train, and with whom they had spent the previous night carousing in the station store.

While the advance guard was still speculating upon the flutter it had caused in this particular dovecot, a pair of lurid flashes showed up against the grey mass of a low hill behind Elandslaagte, and a couple of shells, with vicious velocity, buried themselves in the loam of the plateau amongst the Light Horsemen. This fire the Boer gunners sustained with excellent ranging and bad fusing while General French came up and conned the situation. Behind the I.L.H., French only had the Natal Field Battery and half a battalion. The information which the escaped prisoners now brought him convinced the General that he could not try conclusions with the enemy without

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reinforcements. He therefore fell back a couple of miles and telegraphed to Ladysmith. He was promised a strong support, cavalry by road and infantry by rail.

In the meantime there was a long and interesting wait. Steevens and Maud turned up. I lunched with them. Steevens had not forgotten his genius for commissariat, and he produced out of his saddlebag a large tin of *Bécasse aux truffes*. As the party sat at meat it was possible to see isolated Boers on the skyline riding towards Ladysmith as if they proposed to try and cut French off, while the popping of Mausers showed that the march outposts were dodging Boer bullets. At that moment it all seemed very absurd, as there was not enough stir and bustle of war to vitiate the pastoral picture of the landscape.

By 2.30 in the afternoon French had a very respectable little force with which to clear up the situation at Elandslaagte. He had not, however, too much time, as the threatening storm would be certain to curtail the daylight. Colonel Ian Hamilton had been sent out with three battalions of infantry. These were the Devons, Manchesters and Gordons. French had had ample time to make a close reconnaissance of the Boers' position. It was all very comfortable and naïve. So different from what so many of us were to experience later. The ridge the Boers held presented a neat little tactical problem, such as is set with recurring monotony at Aldershot to those who have to pass an examination for " tactical fitness to command." It is only with a very green enemy at the very beginning of a campaign that commanders in war

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are faced with such problems. A nice little hill, with two nice little cannons, and a thousand men more or less ensconced upon it. The only unknown factor was the efficacy of the magazine rifle in capable hands.

French, having disposed his mounted troops so that both flanks of the position could be duly turned, left the infantry attack to Ian Hamilton. The latter, doubtless mindful of the Long Valley, disposed his battalions so that the Devons advanced directly upon the Boer position on a wide front and with great depth between the companies, while the Manchesters and Gordons moved to a flank to bring an oblique attack upon the nice little ridge. While his battalions were still massed under cover he made them a stirring little speech in which he reminded those who could hear that on the morrow the newsboys would be shouting the victory they were about to win in the London streets. Which was, at least, an anticipatory compliment to the dispatch to be shown by the Correspondents.

Just as the flank marched off, to make the text-book operation even more realistic, Sir George White and Staff arrived to observe, but not to direct the action.

My first instinct was to stay with my old friends the Devons, but the two Boer guns began to shell their advance so vigorously that I thought I would get better value if I rode after the flank attack. I cantered down to the Gordons. Dismounting, I fell in behind the leading company. The Gordons were now directing upon a rock-strewn incline.

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The threatened rain began to fall, and I undid my waterproof. Farther to the right where the Manchesters had disappeared from view rifles were popping incessantly. The Gordons were plodding on in silence save for the rattle of their feet upon the stones. Rain now fell freely, and I was surprised at the constant swish of what I took to be the slack of my wet waterproof. Then a Gordon near me collapsed, and I realized that it was not the swish of sodden indiarubber, but the song of the Mauser bullet. There was cover ahead just before the brow of the slope, and the thought uppermost in my mind when I realized the truth was whether our ponies, led by Coats, would reach it without being hit.

The Gordons were now halted under the brow of the hill. Colonel Dick Cunningham wanted to take a bearing, before committing his men to the attack. Coats and I found good cover both for ourselves and the animals under a split outcrop. Here Steevens, leading his white pony, joined us. He was coolly excited, and as he wiped the rain from his pince-nez he said: "This, James, is going to be a great fight. No Dervishes armed with sticks this time. We are going to be in the thick of it. All those other fellows who stayed back with the guns will never know what they have missed!"

Then the rain came down in sheets. Dick Cunningham realized the opportunity this fierce downpour gave him, and ordered the advance. There was a little ravine to be crossed—it was not more than 50 yards—and then a ledge that was the lip of a gentle glacis that led up to the main

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position that the enemy were holding. As the Gordons rose to the rush, the rain stopped abruptly. This raised the curtain. There was a crash of fire, and the bullets smacked and sputtered on the sheltering rock.

"We shall have to stay here until the target changes," I said. Steevens pushed his reins over to Coats, and looked cautiously through the split in the outcrop.

"My God!" he cried. "They have killed the lot!"

I pushed up beside him. The whole line of Gordons were down on their faces among the rocks in the depression below. At the first glance it looked as if they were all corpses. They were only taking cover, as old soldiers of Tirah experience knew how to take cover, until the attack on the right should attract away some of the savage cross-fire. Even now this fire had lessened.

"I must go on," said Steevens; and he led his white horse round the corner of the boulders.

I remained in the cover a few minutes longer and then followed down into the kloof. The Gordons were again on the move. They began to clamber up the ledge. The first efforts were failures. As soon as the men appeared on the ledge they came falling back, shot in head or chest. It was horrible to see dead and wounded pulled over the lip of the ledge by the ankles to make room for those who a moment later were to share their fate. At this moment Ian Hamilton, with Valentine and Ronnie Brooke of his Staff, arrived in the kloof.

I caught Brooke by the arm and urged him

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not to let the Colonel go up the ledge. The Colonel passed along to the left under cover of the ledge.

The phases of a battle are rapid and changing. Some enveloping pressure had caused the Boers to change their target, or to withdraw, for the Gordons were hardly down on their faces before the order to " Advance " was again passed down. The ledge, hitherto so fatal, had now become easily negotiable. If there was any opposing fire, it was only slight. I climbed up on to the glacis, and saw the gentle slope dotted with groups of running figures. Sometimes they stopped to wrestle with the wait-a-bit thorns of a barbed-wire fence; at others they lay still as if all had been swept down by a single stroke. The mind at these moments cannot carry much detail. Three things remain marked in my memory. A tall figure on the skyline, in a black tail-coat, standing, and firing his rifle at us; George Steevens leading his white horse up the glacis; and, in my own immediate vicinity, a soft-hearted but ignorant Highlander, trying to stanch the flow of blood from a stricken comrade's mouth with wool torn from a first field dressing.

Having seen this much, I doubled back to Coats and the horses. Coats was with the dead and wounded in the ravine. My intention was to try and reach the Devons. If I saw their frontal attack pushed to a successful issue, I could then leave for Ladysmith and its telegraph office.

Following the downward trend of the ravine, in two minutes I and my man were in as complete isolation as if no battle were in progress at all.

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We cantered, following the contour of the ridge, and yet found no sign of the main attack. We met a solitary trooper holding two horses at the foot of a little knoll. This was French's orderly. General French, the officer commanding the battle, was standing a lone figure on a detached eminence. Not a soul was with him. All his Staff had been dissipated. How different was the future to be, when, fourteen years later, his General Headquarters in France was a hive of working assistants.

A hundred yards farther along and the flank attack was reached. Fortunately for me the assault had been delayed. The leading companies of the Devons were halted in the dead ground at the foot of the position. The officers were hurriedly decreasing the company fronts. Could an arrival have been more opportune?

I jumped from my pony and adjured Coats as he valued his future state not to move from the spot until I returned to him. I fell in with my old friend Field at the head of "F" Company, just as he gave it the order to advance.

It is impossible to describe the climb up the hill-side. In gasps I told Field what had happened to the flank attack. Man remembers but little when he is in front of a scintillating line of bayonets. It all remains as a dream, as a blur. There was a steep climb: then it was through, or over, a fence; a shout of warning from somewhere. "Look out, sir!" A lurid explosion that was felt rather than seen! A grim muzzle of a gun, still smoking! A gunner struggling with a lanyard —no, he is under foot, and then men wildly

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cheering, and raising their helmets on their bayonets, while line after line of khaki figures, like hounds through a gap, come pouring into the position, shouting fiercely, "Majuba! Majuba!"

It was already evening, and a great red sun was setting, as it were through a slit in the thunder clouds. As the victors of the direct attack stood cheering on the hill-top there was a recrudescence of well-nourished rifle fire on the far side of the knoll. There was more work for the Devons ahead. Travers, Field, Emerson were all fire again. They rallied their men and swept down to meet the counter-attack.

I could see that the battle was over. There were 12 or 14 miles to be covered before I could reach Ladysmith and a telegraph office. The short South African twilight had already arrived. I could not, therefore, stay to count the loss or gain. It was only when I began to descend the hill to where I had left Coats and the nags, that I realized how long the way and how heavy the day had been. It was almost dark when I reached the plain, and I could see no sign of the horses. Again, as if the scene had been changed by a magic pass, I was in the midst of a great solitude. All sounds of men and their brutal passions had dwindled away. I called and an answering holloa told me that Coats had stood his ground. We had barely time to take our points of direction before a shroud of darkness infinite and rain mist descended upon the veldt.

There is no need to dwell upon the difficulties of that night ride. It was slow and *pénible* enough since no less than twenty odd passages

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had to be cut through wire fencing before we struck the Ladysmith Road.

It was past ten o'clock when, almost dead to the world, I arrived at Mrs. Haydon's house. Those who read newspapers over their breakfast coffee little realize the human agony that some message may have entailed. Tired so that I could neither eat nor drink, I lit a lamp and toiled out three hundred words of description of the battle. Each word was an agonized labour. I then crawled to Major Altham, the Press Censor, who being agog for news of the fighting, had not yet gone to bed. I brought him the first account by an eye-witness, and he would have kept me there for hours, if I had not insisted upon the vital importance of getting the message to the telegraph office.

Returning to Mrs. Haydon's, I made an honest effort to begin a long detailed description of the battle. Human nature failed, and I threw myself on my bed and fell into the dead sleep of complete physical exhaustion. I never moved until beneath my pillow the chime of my alarum watch woke me at four in the morning. After having made myself a cup of chocolate, I began to write my detailed message descriptive of this complete and successful little battle. By seven it was certain that the Censor would be awake, and such sections of the telegrams as were completed were taken across by Coats, to be censored and sent off. Later, Major Murray,[1] the Assistant Censor, came over and sat in the room while I completed my

[1] Gen. Sir Archibald Murray, Lord Ypres' Chief of Staff in 1914, and afterwards C.-in-C. in Palestine.

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labours. At 10 a.m. I was clear, and my message, dispatched in ten sections, was well on the wires.

This was my first important delivery to *The Times*. It arrived when public interest was at fever-pitch. It established my reputation in my craft with my new employers. In fact, Moberly Bell was so pleased with it that he cabled his thanks to me. I do not claim that it was any particular *coup*: it was, however, up to time, and in the opinion of those whose judgment counted, also up to the standard of the great paper.

The jubilation over the success at Elandslaagte was short-lived. Opportunities had been lost by the officer who succeeded to the command at Talana, after the luckless Penn-Symonds had been mortally wounded. The Boers we had met at Elandslaagte were but a detachment. The real strength of the belligerent Dutchmen was now pouring over the passes and collecting in a flood against the defenders of the Colony.

The military situation in Ladysmith was not a happy one. Although the unsuspecting citizens were rejoicing over two minor tactical successes, in reality the balance was heavily against the British Force in Natal.

The detached Dundee Force was falling back upon Ladysmith by forced marches. No further effort was made to engage the invaders in detail. The mobile troops were held inactive. The want of decision was pathetic, and it was evident that all preconceived ideas had become confused in face of the startling results effected by the use of magazine rifles and smokeless powder in mass.

I had by now made up my mind that investment

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in Ladysmith was to be the fate of the Natal Field Force, and I cabled to *The Times* to know if I should remain in the town in all circumstances. In view of the censorship I had, of necessity, to frame the message in language of some ambiguity. The London staff of *The Times* have never proved very sagacious in reading between the lines of my messages when I have had to disguise news in an irrelevant wrapping. In this case I was thought to be seeking instructions, when my only object was solely to convey to the office the knowledge that Ladysmith would in all probability be invested. The answer which my cable elicited was left to the post and it reached me some five months later.

I was, however, to have many examples of cryptic messages failing to illuminate the imagination of those who handled them in the office. All said and done, it is hard to read a cypher without a key, and young sub-editors working against time are far too concentrated on their work to delve for a Bacon cypher in every line of Shakespeare.

The Dundee Column staggered into Ladysmith under forced draught and with them came Monypenny. It was not the Monypenny of Maritzburg, with his supercilious stare and sly humour. It was a Monypenny worn to a rag, and fit to die of fatigue. I took him in to Mrs. Haydon, and gave him nourishment. Then I behaved brutally. I made Monypenny, who was my senior be it remembered, sit down right away and put on paper his detailed story of the battle of Talana and the retreat from Dundee. Monypenny prayed

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for a little sleep and promised a masterpiece for the morrow. For the War Correspondent there is no to-morrow: I had never forgotten my sad lesson of the Malakand Pass. I was inexorable. I knew that if Monypenny were allowed rest the weekly mail would be missed, and I was positive that this was the last weekly mail that we in Ladysmith would catch for several weeks to come.

Monypenny pleaded for rest, he even threatened: but he was too tired to resist, and he wrote that wonderful account of the retreat from Dundee with me standing over him. As he finished it he rolled back on to my bed, and fell into a dead sleep from which he did not awake for sixteen hours. I removed his muddy boots and putties as he lay there. I then sealed up the story of Talana and put it in the same cover with my own expanded description of Elandslaagte, and hurried with them to the post.

The subsequent history of these two accounts is interesting. My diagnosis had been right. It was the last weekly post that the inmates of Ladysmith caught. When I returned home to England, Bruce Richmond told me that the steamer that brought this particular mail, for some reason, arrived home earlier than the scheduled time.

The letters were delivered in London late on Friday night instead of on the Saturday morning. Mr. Buckle, the Editor, debated whether he would rush the combined written story of Talana and Elandslaagte into Saturday's paper, or leave it over until Monday. He decided on the former course, and *The Times* was the only paper that published the details before Monday.

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By October 27th it was obvious to everyone that the Boers were, if slowly, at least surely, pushing out tentacles to envelop Ladysmith. Reconnaissances and local reports came in from every side. To the onlooker it seemed that the Staff felt that they ought to do something, but did not quite know what should be done. A subaltern of a cavalry regiment brought in an exact report of a Boer laager that had been formed at Farquhar's Farm a few miles outside Ladysmith. Sir Ian Hamilton was sent out with an infantry brigade to deal with this force. Its location was perhaps the only piece of real concrete information that the Staff at that moment had with regard to the invasion.

Steevens and I rode out to see what it was all about. When we caught up the Force, it had halted and the General was making a personal reconnaissance. It was then already late in the afternoon. The result of the reconnaissance was that Ian Hamilton proposed to make a night march and rush the laager in the dark. We were content to await events and to bivouac with the Force until it moved. After a pleasant evening on light fare with some of our friends, Steevens and I rolled ourselves up in our horse blankets, on the understanding that we were to be awakened when the move took place.

I awoke with a start to find that it was broad daylight. I awakened Steevens, who was still slumbering peacefully. There was not a soul in sight. We with our tethered horses were alone amid the veldt-scrub. Hamilton's Brigade had vanished. Had the Boer laager been rushed? It

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could hardly have been without the sound of the firing having disturbed us. An attempt at amateur tracking suggested that Hamilton had retired back to Ladysmith. Anyway the loneliness of the veldt was very oppressive to us, and we made our way back with considerable dispatch. Ian Hamilton's orders had been countermanded during the night, and his force had withdrawn without disturbing either Steevens or myself.

This episode preceded the last enterprise of the Natal Field Force, as a mobile and unfettered unit. This last effort has come down to history as "Mournful Monday." It was a miserable, disjointed and ill-directed affair. It introduced the British Army to the first shell fire that it had experienced since Arabi Pasha's feeble efforts in 1882. The Boers had brought a position piece into action on Pepworth Hill.

Early in the morning a great pillar of white smoke shot up from the centre of this commanding eminence to be followed a few seconds later by the burst of a heavy projectile near the railway station in Ladysmith. We now know in our ripe experience of many warlike things that this shelling, as a bombardment, was almost puerile, but it provided a new and unexpected sensation. Coming as it did upon the depression that followed the failure of the operations outside Ladysmith, the fact that the despised Boers were able to throw projectiles into the township, against which there appeared to be no ordnance of sufficient power to reply, dispelled in one impulse the sense of security that the initial success at Elandslaagte had created.

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The open places in the town were crowded with the wagons of loyal farmers who had "trekked" in from the country already occupied by the Boers. In Ladysmith they had thought to find absolute sanctuary. With the burst of the first shell this faith in the power of the British Army to protect them had evaporated. The men were uncertain as to what course they should pursue. The women were distracted with the terror of a situation they had sacrificed their homes to evade. Nor was this acute anxiety confined to the farmer refugees. A shell had exploded near the hotel, and when I pulled my horse up in front of this damaged hostelry, I found there a group of very agitated Pressmen. The shelling had brought these men back to the town, and I was delayed with questions as to what had happened during the actual fighting. Vague stories of disaster were in circulation. One Correspondent with a blanched face asked breathlessly, "Are we in the soup?" while another said that an experienced colleague, shouting, "All is lost," had driven south in his Cape cart with his team stretched out in a gallop to get clear before the little Frontier town was completely invested.

The demoralizing effect of a little shell fire is remarkable, and it is possible that Sir George White would have had considerable trouble with the timorous civilian element, if at this juncture the Naval Brigade had not arrived with guns, which the populace, at least, thought were the equal of the grim old piece that was merrily pounding away from Pepworth Hill.

By nightfall matters had quieted down consider-

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ably. The Boers had not pressed their advantages when the British retirement upon the town had taken place: and when stock was taken of the damage done by the bombardment it was found that the effect of the big "bombs," as the civilian inhabitants called them, had been slight in comparison to the fuss and noise they had made. It was, however, certain that the isolation of Ladysmith could now only be a matter of hours. A few crowded trains were able to get away south, and in the last of these was General French, and Colonel Douglas Haig, who escaped to do such distinguished service in Cape Colony and subsequently to raise the Siege of Kimberley.

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CHAPTER XI

A LEAGUER

LADYSMITH became isolated definitely on the afternoon of October 31st. As my narrative has shown, I had foreseen the possibility and had determined to remain in the town. I had made my arrangements accordingly. A Mr. Richard Goldman had joined our Mess. With him and Maxwell I reviewed the situation, and took stock of our resources. The last message that I had sent from Ladysmith before it was isolated was a request to Goldman's brother to send me a crate of carrier pigeons, which could be procured from Durban.

These pigeons were duly sent off with a Kaffir, who was to try and make his way to us by road. Unfortunately he was captured, and a humorous Boer signaller heliographed into Ladysmith: "Thank *The Times* Correspondent for a basket of nice fat pigeons."

It was with some misgivings that I settled down in Mrs. Haydon's boarding-house to suffer the rigours of this investment. Our landlady had decided to keep her establishment open as long as her stock of provisions lasted. On the 31st she had nine or ten guests. These included myself, Maxwell and Goldman. The others were Mr. Bennett, the Resident Magistrate already men-

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tioned, a hard-headed colonial; Mr. Cameron, a dry Scotsman, who had a store in town; Mr. Mitchell, Maxwell's assistant on the *Standard*; another townsman, who was known as the lugubrious New Zealander; a robust refugee priest from Johannesburg called McTavish; Mrs. Haydon's son; young Lloyd, the son of the Minister of Agriculture in Natal; a hospital nurse; and a musical comedy artiste, like the priest, in retreat from Johannesburg.

Most of these inmates of the establishment dropped out before many days had passed, as the camp for non-combatants at Intombi Camp gave refuge to the ladies and the timorous, and sickness claimed several others. Mrs. Haydon, though a frail woman, stuck bravely to her house throughout the trying months, though after the first weeks of the investment she only could offer her guests a roof.

The effect of shell fire in Ladysmith would have been amusing, if it had not been pathetic. It set everyone digging. The most ingenious bolt holes were fashioned by those who had not cellars. The Imperial Light Horse, with its personnel of expert miners, tunnelled the shelving banks of the Klip River with a spacious gallery. Steevens and Maud with their Kaffir servants shouldered pick and shovel and made a very creditable penthouse in front of their garden cottage.

An official bugler was stationed to observe the discharge of the big gun. As soon as this musician saw the pillar of white smoke, he sounded a short call—right about wheel—and the immediate neighbourhood understood that they had twenty seconds

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in which to run to ground. It was curious, however, to remark how soon the shelters fell into disuse. The civilians became acclimatized to this innocuous type of shell fire, and their general attitude towards any special effort at self-preservation was one of *ça ne vaut pas la peine.*

Ladysmith was invested for exactly four calendar months. As far as my memory and my diary serves me, these four months may be conveniently classified as follows: November, Novelty; December, *Ennui*; January, Desperation; February, Resignation and Starvation.

During November no one looked upon the situation of the garrison as serious. The circumstances of the investment was considered an unfortunate embarrassment. Everyone knew that troops would be rapidly pushed into South Africa, and basing their confidence upon this knowledge summed up the investment as an unfortunate but temporary abandonment of mobility. To the young soldiers the situation presented promise of all the excitements of active service, without the weariness of long marches.

Everyone speculated as to the time it would take Buller to relieve the garrison, and the most pessimistic were satisfied that Christmas would be the limit of Ladysmith's troubles. No one took the situation very seriously, and I myself played polo three times a week on the Gordons' Parade ground until the Boer gunners began to consider it a misdemeanour, and made us a target.

How trumpery the investment was from an artillery point of view may be judged by the fact that the Boers never mounted more than twenty-

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two pieces of ordnance against the town: they had not a too plentiful supply of ammunition. They proved themselves to be most partial and generous gunners. With their three 6-inch guns they usually fired about twenty-four rounds per day in three *séances*. They were so methodical that the energetic in the garrison could fit their business and their pleasure in between these *séances*.

The size of the perimeter held by the garrison was such that there was always considerable freedom of movement to those among the garrison who possessed a horse, and were content to face the very remote risk of a stray bullet. Although direct communication was cut off with the South, yet visual signalling had been established with the British Force at Frere. I myself had arranged a courier post-service by means of Kaffir runners who passed through the Boer investing lines at night. I had the good fortune never to lose a message in transit. This requires a little explanation. If I had not taken the precaution to write each of my messages in triplicate, and dispatch the copies on different days, I would doubtless have lost many. As it was, though some messages suffered delay the whole sequence of my Story of the Siege reached *The Times* Office.

With my first message I had singular good fortune. The Kaffir who carried the account of "Mournful Monday" and the subsequent story of the early days of the Investment arrived at Escourt, when that village had itself been invested temporarily by the Boers. The message came into the hands of Amery, my colleague on *The*

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Times who had come round to Natal to get in touch with us. Amery, who was ever the embodiment of resourceful gallantry, immediately rode through the Boer investing lines during the night and put the dispatches on the wires at Pietermaritzburg. As a result of Amery's prompt and plucky action *The Times* had definite news from inside Ladysmith weeks before any other newspaper.

To those who had no military and little journalistic responsibility November was a pleasant enough month in Ladysmith. There was just as much excitement as was necessary to make us appreciate that we were invested. We could canter from post to post, and then worm out on our stomachs, and see the Boers building *scanzes* or stalking cattle. At stated intervals the cavalry, under General Brocklehurst,[1] would make some sort of reconnaissance, and on one or two occasions the Boers made lukewarm attacks.

The stories that circulated of the shell fire were constantly alarming, but in point of fact the bombardment was only remarkable for the amount of damage that it failed to effect. The Town Hall, in use as a hospital, was hit, also the Church. Among the first of the casualties from shell-bursts was a local blacksmith. The Boer 6-inch shells being in many cases indifferently fused, often failed to explode. There was a keen demand, especially amongst Natalians, to secure " Long Tom " shells as mementoes. The blacksmith in question having secured a live shell, set about the withdrawal of

[1] The late Lord Ranksborough, who had succeeded French in command of the cavalry.

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the charge in an original manner. He drilled a hole in the base, and then into the aperture inserted a red-hot iron rod. The result was immediate and terrific.

This disaster brought a notification in General Orders as to the danger incurred by amateur charge-drawing. Experts were then requisitioned from the gunners to such an extent that one battery commander had a notice put up in his lines to the effect that his sentries had orders to shoot any unauthorized person or persons seen carrying live shell in the vicinity of his camp.

Headquarters suggested that the Newspaper Correspondents should produce a newspaper. Steevens, Maud, Maxwell and myself formed ourselves into a committee and produced the sheet which will go down to history as the *Ladysmith Lyre*. Steevens was the prime mover in the venture and was responsible for the title and much of the humour of the sheet. There were altogether four issues of the *Ladysmith Lyre*, one of which, pathetically enough, was produced after Steevens, the original editor-in-chief, was dead.

By the end of November the novelty of life in a besieged township had worn itself through; moreover, a very marked stringency in the supply of foodstuffs was beginning to manifest itself. Eggs in the market were hard to procure at 7*s*. 6*d*. a dozen, while condensed milk was readily bought at 6*s*. a tin. I counted myself fortunate in that I was able to buy, at cost price, a case of whisky from the Mess of the Devonshire Regiment. Everyone, however, was still confident that Buller would raise the investment before Christmas.

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The state of optimism of the garrison may be judged by the entertainment which the Gordons gave on the anniversary of the Scots Patron Saint. Sir George White, himself a Gordon Highlander, was invited, while I represented the Press among the subalterns at the lower end of the table. Since it was a siege dinner the menu of this St. Andrew's night banquet is worth recording. It consisted of Scotch Broth, Salmon Mayonnaise, Haggis, Saddle of Mutton, Turkey and Ham, Asparagus and Fruit Salad. Within three months of this elaborate repast the majority of those who took part in it were drawn fine with hunger, while two at least of the diners had died a soldier's death.

The first real shock to the optimism of the garrison came with the news of Buller's failure at Colenso. The result of this unfortunate engagement was given to the garrison in a General Order two days after the battle. Sir George White issued a manly statement in which he expressed his confidence that "the defence of Ladysmith will be continued by the garrison in the same spirited manner as it has hitherto been conducted." No mention of the now famous Buller telegram that was destined to wreck the career of a very popular soldier was allowed to leak out. Even though Sir George put as bright a complexion upon the situation as might be expected in a brave and optimistic Irishman, yet the ring of the Garrison Order was as a wet douche upon the hopes of the invested.

It was said nevertheless, by the cynical, that the bad news from Colenso, however, brought a

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secret solace to the Staff of the Natal Field Force. Until the Colenso failure, they were not sure how far military opinion might condone in the Natal Field Force the rather precipitate surrender of its mobility. Steevens, whose sense of the ridiculous no amount of misfortune could stifle, had a story that when visual communication was established with the South, the first message that went through from Ladysmith was a private appeal from a senior member on White's Staff to his opposite number on Buller's which read as follows: "Are we considered fools or heroes?"

Be this as it may, the garrison had now to take careful stock of its provender. It was curious to remark how adversity found out character, and how in the matter of discerning character amongst those around us how deceitful is the easy path of normal circumstances. In many cases where resolution and purpose were most expected, in Ladysmith, were discovered vacillation and despondency; while, on the other hand, characters that had presented to their associates no particular attractions developed surprising and sterling qualities.

Be it said at once, that Sir George White and his entire Staff exhibited to those who came in daily contact with them a front that was more than admirable. Sir George was always smiling and good-natured, while Colonel Ward, the Chief Supply Officer, to whom the difficulties of the situation were more apparent than to all others, stifled the black bogie of his haunting cares under a cloak of bonhomie that was never more transcendent than during Ladysmith's darkest hours.

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There were, on the other hand, natures that broke down under the strain of morbid apprehension. Doubtless the doctors could tell of numbers in this category that passed into their sick wards and on to the grave. I myself call to mind two among my personal friends who sickened and died from no more malignant cause than inability to face the future.

The wave of general pessimism reached the highest mark just before the end of the year. The news of all the checks to British Arms had arrived—no news arrives so surely as bad news; rations were considerably reduced; luxuries were not procurable except at outrageous prices; while *enteric*, that curse of sedentary armies, had taken a grim hold upon the garrison. Poor Steevens contracted it in December, while of the inmates of Mrs. Haydon's boarding-house three passed away to Intombi hospital camp and its fast developing horrors. I myself kept hale and hearty, but of the fourteen civilian inmates of the boarding-house I and one other alone went through the whole investment without some period of sickness.

When Steevens sickened he was taken to a house in the main street quite close to Mrs. Haydon's. Here he was nursed with touching fidelity by his messmate Maud. The difficulty, however, was to procure milk. The administration of a beleaguered town to be successful must approximate in some respects that state of utopia which Communists vainly imagine. That is to say, luxuries and necessaries of life alike must be pooled in the interests of the common weal. These obligatory measures bring a crowd of evils in their

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train. The amassing and redistribution of milk in any circumstances would be a delicate operation. In the rough-and-ready organization of a military department it was a desperate expedient for the unfortunate sufferers in the hospitals. Sound and unsound milk was mixed, and many a life lost that might otherwise have been saved must be traced to the state in which the milk reached the patients.

The Boer gunners enlivened Christmas with certain seasonable pleasantries. They fired a number of plugged shell into town. These on examination were found to contain "Yule-tide Messages," while one had been "charged" with plum-pudding. I went to Headquarters to pay my respects to Sir George White. The Chief was in an almost festive frame of mind as he had just received a helio message from Queen Victoria, who had not forgotten her loyal soldiers, marooned in dusty little Ladysmith.

On my return home I found that Colonel Frank Rhodes had looked in. He had not forgotten that it was Christmas Day, and with his habitual thoughtfulness and kindliness of nature he had brought a little gift. It was a red-silk *kammarband*, and as he pressed it into my hand he said, "When I first joined the Service, my Commanding Officer gave me a *kammarband*, and said, 'Wear this always; it is the first and best order that I shall ever give you.'"

The humdrum life of the besieged continued in varied forms of monotony until the great events of January 6, 1900. Life at Mrs. Haydon's boarding-house was becoming strained. The

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boarders had now all broken up into little messes and eked out a careful existence upon their daily ration and such small store of tinned provisions that they had in *caches*. Maxwell, Goldman and myself possessed a slender reserve of the whisky bought from the Devons. This was reduced by mathematical calculation to a daily ration. Each evening the three members of the Mess met to partake of their daily ration. The Mess President solemnly undid the bottle. The portions were measured out and then the bottle was carefully sealed, and the seal deposited with one of the Mess other than the President.

Mrs. Haydon's household had now sadly thinned out. All the women and some of the able-bodied men had gone to Intombi, Mitchell of the *Standard* was dead, and several others were in hospital. A few convalescents from the Natal local troops sought the shelter of the roof at various periods. Meals at the common table had already begun to be distressing, since it was difficult for those who had a few luxuries to watch their less fortunate table-mates languishing upon the reduced official ration. Few at that early period even realized how brutally callous the majority of men were to become later in the trying days of January and February.

The great attack came during the night of January 5th–6th. The story of January 6th as a military achievement has been well told in so many places, that I will not attempt any description of the action. It will suffice to say the attack failed. On the morning following the Boers tacitly admitted their defeat, and there were no

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hostilities while parties from both sides searched the scrub and ravines on the hill-sides for their dead and wounded.

I remember few occasions when I have felt the seamy side of my profession as acutely. There was something so brutally realistic in the confirmation that we found on Wagon Point of Sir Ian Hamilton's story of his hand-to-hand fight. The body of Wessels, the black-bearded Veldt-Kornet of the Harrismith Commando, was lying with those of two other burghers in the spot where the English General had shot him with his revolver.

I had lost many close friends with whom I had been intimate for years. Miller Walnutt, benign and courteous; Mackworth, gallant and enterprising; Mills of the Rifle Brigade; Ava, the ever-cheery Staff Officer; Lafone, satirical and open-handed; Field, joyous and boylike; Digby-Jones and Denniss, almost daily companions at the Sappers' tea-table.

The Boers who joined the British in the search for the missing seemed dazed at what had happened. They had been led to believe that Ladysmith lay in their hands like a ripe fruit to be plucked at will. They could hardly be brought to understand that the forces which had stemmed the renowned Buller at Colenso with such trifling losses could be decimated by the garrison of shell-dragooned Ladysmith.

Steevens, of the *Daily Mail*, was in bed, recovering as it was hoped from enteric. On my return from Cæsar's Camp I spent an hour with him piecing together the story of the battle, and helping him with a message to his paper. Maxwell

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went sick this day, and it looked as if he also was to be clutched by the prevailing fever.

The chequered career of the long descriptive message which I had sent to *The Times* is worthy of mention. Maxwell and I sent our messages by the same "Kaffir" hand. Maxwell was well enough to write a description of "January 6th." That was about all he could do, and it was left to me to dispatch the messages. They were ultimately sent off in triplicate, on successive days. Only one of the three Kaffirs succeeded in reaching Buller's Headquarters. The message addressed to the *Standard* was immediately handed to Maxwell's colleague with the Relief Force; the message addressed to *The Times*, however, was detained by Buller's Staff, for information and reference purposes, and was not forwarded *until nine days after it was received*, although a *résumé* of it was cabled to the War Office as official information. This was one of the worst pieces of fortune that ever overtook my messages to *The Times*.

Four days after the successful defence of Wagon Hill, there was evidence in Ladysmith of Buller's efforts to bring relief by way of Potgeiter's Drift and Spion Kop. On January 13th Maud, who was Steeven's messmate, came in with the news that Steevens had had a relapse and that his condition was grave. This was a cruel shock, as we had all imagined that the poor fellow had turned the corner. The relapse was traced to the cause already mentioned, the inferiority of the milk drawn from the pooled supply issued by the authorities. It was now the South African mid-

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summer and some turned milk had been mixed with the fresh and contaminated the whole.

Steevens' relapse was fatal, and I turn to my diary to relate the last sad page of his brilliant career. "It is with a heavy heart that I take up my pen to write. Poor old Steevens died about five o'clock. I have lost in this wretched rat-hole Ladysmith another friend and upright colleague. The incidents of his death-bed are singularly pathetic and characteristic of the man, who was one of the bravest I have ever met. . . . When it was evident that the end was at hand the doctor sent Maud in to tell him.

"*Maud.*—'You had better write a wire to your wife.'

"*Steevens.*—'You write it for me.'

"Maud, who had devotedly nursed him, wrote: 'Steevens is dangerously ill,' and showed the message to him. Steevens looked fixedly at him, and asked, 'Does that mean that I am dying?' Maud nodded.

"*Steevens.*—'Soon?' Maud again nodded.

"*Steevens.*—'Well, it is a strange side-way out.' (Then pulling himself together.) 'Let's have a drink.' Maud opened a new bottle of champagne and gave him some to drink.

"*Steevens.*—'You are not having any?'

"Steevens then dictated a few words of endearment to be telegraphed to his wife, and made a silent yet evident effort to pull himself together. Maud could read in his face a determination not to die, but there was less strength of body than of mind. He lapsed into unconsciousness and died without pain.

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"We buried him that night in the cemetery at 11.30 p.m. The enemy's searchlight was playing from Bulwana as the sorrowful procession of mounted men wound down to the little hollow where the cypress-shaded Death's Acre lies. . . . The coffin was carried to the grave by—Colonel Stoneman, Major David Henderson, McCormick, Stuart, Nevinson and James."

The elation which the garrison had felt at the successful issue to the great assault of January 6th soon began to wear off under the tightening stresses of the investment.

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CHAPTER XII

DELIVERED

IT is hard to understand how the garrison dragged through those last two months of the investment. Fortunately the enemy never made a second effort like the one of January 6th. The garrison in February was so reduced in strength by the absence of farinaceous food that it could not have withstood a really determined assault. It suffered the hopes and disappointments of Buller's unavailing efforts to encompass its relief. But after Spion Kop the barometer of the general despondency set at a very low level, and reacted in the matter of the poor resistance that the attenuated fighting strength made to the alarming spread of sickness. But with the battle of Pieter's Hill late in February relief was in sight.

On the last day of February the longed-for succour came. All the morning evidences of a northern movement had been observed from the Ladysmith defences. The non-appearance of Buller's cavalry on the heels of the retiring Boers was inexplicable. I had gone to Headquarters in the afternoon to see if they had there any definite news from below.

Just about five o'clock one of Henderson's Intelligence Guides rode up hot foot shouting,

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"The relief force is just across the river!" I dashed down to the drift by the Natal Carabineers' camp, and was just in time to see Major Hubert Gough of the 16th Lancers splashing through the ford at the head of his and Major Mackenzie's squadron of Natal Carabineers.

The investment of Ladysmith was raised. The scene at the drift was moving. The townsfolk crowded down to bless the bearded, campaign-worn troopers. Sir George White rode out and met the incomers. Strong men cheered and spoke in husky voices; pale, emaciated women were moved to tears. It was a glorious moment. The news spread round the perimeter like wild-fire. Men who had lived like troglodytes for 118 days came out of their defence works and cheered until the tears ran down their cheeks.

I, however, had little time to indulge my own personal feelings in this momentous relief. It was my duty to get away from Ladysmith with as little delay as possible. I was now a professional journalist, and I knew that my story from within the invested township, for a matter of forty-eight hours would be "good copy" in England.

Realizing this, I had made every arrangement to leave Ladysmith the moment the leaguer was raised. It was five o'clock on February 28th that the investing ring was pierced. This did not mean that the Boers had completely evacuated their positions. They were, however, withdrawing with fevered rapidity, and were engaged all the evening and night in dismantling their gun positions.

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As soon as the first burst of enthusiasm had died down I returned to Headquarters to get a permit for myself and Coats to pass through the outpost line. Colonel Duff, when he heard the mission, said that Sir George would like to see me. Sir George gave me a verbal message to Sir Redvers Buller. He told me to tell Buller that the garrison was practically immobile, but that before daylight on the morrow a column of all arms would move out from Ladysmith and attempt to drive the Boers from their railway depot-station at Modder Spruit. He would suggest to the Commander-in-Chief in Natal that he sent his cavalry with all dispatch by way of Farquhar's Farm and Elandslaagte to intercept the Boer line of retreat to Dundee.

It may be apropos here to dissipate one popular impression with regard to the Relief of Ladysmith. It is generally believed that Lord Dundonald with Mr. Winston Churchill at his elbow rode into Ladysmith with the first troops that broke through the Boer cordon. This is not the case. Neither Lord Dundonald nor Mr. Churchill were at the drift when Gough's and Mackenzie's squadrons arrived, nor had they yet appeared at Headquarters when Sir George gave me this final instruction.

My intention to leave immediately was delayed by the burst of a torrential thunder-storm. I had perforce to wait until the spruits which came down in spate had somewhat subsided. It was, therefore, dark before Coats and I with a Kaffir guide rode down and across the flats beyond the Klip River. I must recount one incident that touched me greatly. Before I started Dick Goldman, who

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had been a member of our little Mess, hung his Zeiss glasses round my neck and bade me accept them as a keepsake. I have used these glasses upon nine subsequent campaigns, including the Great War.

Our first difficulty occurred at the outlying picket-line. A Volunteer Cavalry sentry seeing mounted figures moving in the scrub, challenged. He challenged so softly that the command was inaudible. The "Halt, or I fire" brought the party up dead. By the aid of a match the officer of the post scanned the pass. With a *bon voyage* he let us through, shouting after us the consoling information that the enemy had been seen moving until nightfall over the route we were proposing to take.

It would be necessary to be imprisoned for four months in a hole like Ladysmith to appreciate the sense of satisfaction that I felt to be free of that pestilential perimeter. Even though the next few hours might be replete in disaster, the burden of captivity was left behind, and Coats and I pushed forward into the unknown difficulties of the night with as much elation as was possible in the case of those penetrating an enemy's country. In the darkness the way was often lost. The gloom in the valleys was such that even the Kaffir guide was at fault and Coats or I had to dismount and feel for the path.

In this way we reached Fouries' Spruit. This was the *nullah*, and perhaps the very hour, in which the Boer Commandoes had concentrated before they made the great assault upon Cæsar's Camp. The bluff of that gaunt ridge towered

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above the spruit. It seemed in the deceptive night-mist that we adventurers were but a few yards from the summit. It behoved us to move gently, lest the sentries on the lower breastworks should hear the ring of our horses' hoofs upon the stones. The pickets were only 600 yards distant, and since January 6th sentries did not challenge moving bodies in Fouries' Spruit.

At regular intervals of about fifteen minutes a great flash showed on the clouds above the hill, and by the crash that followed the night-riders knew that the naval gun was shelling the Boer *epaulement* on Bulwana Mountain. The projectile flew shrieking overhead. Presently a pillar of fire would shoot up on the crest of the table mountain, while for a second Lombard's Kop and Gun Hill would stand out silhouetted clearly against the sky, and then merge back into the inky darkness of the night.

I and my companions struggled down the erratic course of Fouries' Spruit until Cæsar's Camp grew less in outline and finally merged with the night shadows while the sounds of the ¼-hour gun grew faint in the distance. Our little party waded through a stream, and then clambered up an almost perpendicular bank into veldt of knee-deep grass. What would Ladysmith not have given for this grass ten days earlier? The veldt was bounded by a stony knoll up which we climbed, leading our animals, until a stone wall was reached. It looked as if a breastwork barred the way, and the Kaffir was sent forward to reconnoitre, the two Englishmen expecting every moment to see the flash of a Mauser pierce the shadow.

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It was only a farm fence, however, and stumbling along another half-mile a path was found which again led down into veldt meadow. A plantation was reached, when the boy signalled caution, and whispered apprehensively, "Dutchmens." While in the plantation we heard voices, and the sounds of men and stones moving on a hill-side. For a moment I thought that we were discovered, and that the Boers were dropping down upon us from some picket-post. The Kaffir, however, plucked my sleeve and whispered in pigeon-English, "By and by, take him away." By this I understood that we had happened upon a group of Boers dismantling a gun position. "By and by" is the Kaffir expression for artillery.

The situation was now sufficiently exciting. As I listened to the turmoil on the hill, I felt satisfied that it would cover any disturbance which the horses of my party might make as long as the latter refrained from whinnying. I, therefore, pushed on, and in five minutes we were upon a path leading up between two small *kopjes*. Upon topping this rise two fires suddenly were disclosed. These were little more than embers, but they were camp fires, and, as in other places, a fire on the veldt has to be lighted. The Kaffir was again sent forward to reconnoitre. The five minutes he was away were full of suspense. The Kaffir returned and silently signalled us to lead on. We followed him and skirted the fires, but passed sufficiently close to make out the forms of men sleeping on the ground. It seemed half an hour before we drew rein and looked round. Another fold in the veldt now hid the camp from sight.

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These Boers must have been sound sleepers not to have been disturbed. We pushed on another three miles and then dropped down again into a valley. Out of this there was a stiff climb up a *kloof*. Just as the black of night gave way to the first impression of dawn we reached a rolling plateau.

"Dutchmans finish," shouted the Kaffir, and, in spite of the semi-darkness, out of sheer exuberance of spirits at freedom at last gained we urged our animals into a canter. It was an intoxicating feeling, this new sensation of freedom. As the light strengthened I could see the reverse of Bulwana Mountain. It was five long months since I had seen any portion but the slopes towards Ladysmith of that sinister ridge. When daylight had become definitely established we rode into a detachment of the South African Light Horse, and I learned to my delight that Buller's Headquarters was at Pieter's Hill, not more than half a mile distant.

Sir Redvers Buller received me in the most friendly way. He listened to the message from Ladysmith, and then said curtly, "I have sent people up to Bulwana. Ladysmith is not relieved, nor will I move, until I get a message from the summit of that hill."

Realizing the opportunity that was being lost, and picturing in my mind the difficulties of White's attenuated column, if, unaided, it were called upon to face a determined rearguard, I offered myself as guide over the country Sir George had indicated, if Buller would have my cables to *The Times* put upon the wires.

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I do not profess to know what military reason caused Buller to disregard Sir George White's suggestions. No doubt they were good enough. He, however, reiterated his determination not to move until Bulwana was occupied, and then asked to see the cables which I proposed to send. He glanced through them, and his only comment was that they conveyed the impression that Ladysmith had been invested by a far larger force than his own information led him to believe. He retained the bundle of messages and said, "Ladysmith is not relieved until I have occupied Bulwana. The moment I get a message that we are on the top I will have your telegrams sent to the telegraph office."

Sir Redvers was true to his word. The messages were dispatched that morning. It was a Friday, and my detailed account of the Relief appeared in *The Times* on the following morning. The same information was in no other English paper until the following Monday, with the exception of the *Standard*. I had carried the messages for the *Standard* as well as my own by arrangement with Maxwell.

This incident is referred to at length, as Winston Churchill, who had pluckily ridden into Ladysmith when he heard that Gough had cleared a passage, had come out again on the following morning and had tried to usurp my right of priority. He came to Buller protesting that he was the first man out and that his messages should have precedence on the wires. Buller, however, stood by the promise he had made to me, and the *Morning Post* had to wait its turn in spite of

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the importunity of its insistent Correspondent. Whatever may have been Buller's faults as man and General I do not profess to know, but he did not lack a sense of justice. Nor would he allow himself to be hustled out of any pledge he had given.

My proffered services as guide not being required, I made my way down to Colenso. I had hoped to find Bron Herbert,[1] my opposite number on *The Times*, at Buller's Headquarters. No one could say where he was, and I presumed that, hearing of the Relief, he had gone forward to Ladysmith.

When we reached Colenso, I found myself for a brief period a person of note. It had hardly yet been realized that Ladysmith was actually relieved, and the arrival of two from the garrison stirred the railway station. Suddenly I heard my name shouted down the platform, and an old friend caught my hand. It was Major Brazier Creagh, of the Indian Medical Service, an old poker-playing associate of Peshawar and Tirah. He was in charge of a hospital train which was then at Colenso platform. He insisted that I should come at once and have a meal. A meal. Only those who went through the last six weeks in Ladysmith can realize what that word meant. Brazier Creagh did not forget that he was a doctor. He saw that his famished guests did not give undue licence to their hunger. The memory of that first repast in the little compartment of the hospital

[1] The late Lord Lucas. Afterwards Assistant Secretary of State for War in the Asquith Government. Killed as a pilot in an air fight in the Great War.

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train will die with me. It was a dish of *fricassée* chicken, a custard pudding and a half-bottle of champagne. In the circumstances no *chef* to a City Corporation could have bettered the menu.

I felt that I would be in better communication with London, if I continued my journey down to Pietermaritzburg. It may also be that I was prompted with the desire to be the first man from within Ladysmith to arrive in the capital of Natal. I therefore left Coats and the horses at Colenso and journeyed down to Pietermaritzburg. It was already evening when I arrived.

The hostess of the Grand Hotel at first was unable to find me a room. Then learning that I was a survivor of the siege of Ladysmith she made a concession. The wife of an officer who had also shared in the leaguer, had left by the evening train in an endeavour to join her husband. With the nonchalant *naïveté* which is so refreshing among Colonials I was permitted to use this lady's room. She had left at the shortest possible notice. Nothing of hers had been tidied or put away. As I, dog-tired after the labours and excitements of the last forty-eight hours threw myself down to sleep, I could, in my present surroundings redolent as they were of feminine delicacy and taste, only look back at the last four months as upon some horrid unreal phantasy of the night.

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CHAPTER XIII

IMPORTANT EMPLOYMENT

HAVING seen Sir Walter Hely-Hutchinson, the Governor of Natal, to whom, incidentally, by pre-arrangement, the majority of my messages by Kaffir courier through the Boer lines had been sent for ultimate dispatch, I considered it expedient to return immediately to Ladysmith.

I had received a congratulatory cable from *The Times*, and instructions to join Lord Roberts as soon as possible as Chief *Times* Correspondent in the Field.[1]

When I reached Estcourt on my return journey I found there Major Karri Davis and Lieutenant Cresswell of the Imperial Light Horse, both intimate companions of mine during the leaguer, and both seriously indisposed from a surfeit of melon eating against which their exhausted digestive organs had rebelled.

Having slept the night at Estcourt, I rode into Ladysmith on the following morning.

Already supplies had been pushed into the starving town, chief amongst which were great sides of fat bacon. It is no exaggeration to say that, as I approached the perimeter, being down

[1] "Congratulate you on excellent work. Apply Amery for orders greetings (to) Monypenny.—BELL."

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wind, the whole air was tainted with the smell of cooking bacon.

On my return to Mrs. Haydon's, I found that Mr. J. B. Atkins of the *Manchester Guardian* had installed himself in my room. Atkins, whose pen has delighted us in the *Spectator* for a quarter of a century, has ever since told the story of the irate manner in which I resented his presence. The story is a good one in the telling: but it is not convincing to those who know Atkins' charming personality. He is one of those fortunate men with whom it is impossible to be angry. His smile alone would disarm all wrath. Bron Herbert, my *Times* colleague with the Relief force, was also found in Ladysmith. Here again was another engaging personality, though at the moment he seemed a little bewildered from all that he had witnessed with Buller in the stupendous struggle to break through into Ladysmith.

I stayed just long enough in the town to wind up my partnership with Maxwell, and to turn over my share of the horses and equipment to Bron Herbert. Then taking Coats with me I shook the dust of Ladysmith off my feet for ever and journeyed down to Durban to take steamer to Capetown.

Thus closed one of the most interesting, sensational and instructive episodes in my life. Although I had lost there many dear friends by the wastage of war, yet I had made many others from among the officers of the garrison. Many of these were destined to become very famous soldiers in the Great War. There was Sir Ian Hamilton, even at the worst stages of the investment debonair

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and optimistic. Alas, this optimism in military appreciation was to prove his undoing at Gallipoli. Lord Rawlinson, destined to be one of our greatest Army Commanders in France. Sir Philip Chetwode of the 19th Hussars, and Stephens of the Rifle Brigade, who were Divisional Generals second to none during the crisis of 1914–1918.

Among my own professional colleagues I owe a great debt of gratitude to Sir William Maxwell. My close association with him during the siege was of infinite value to me professionally. Maxwell, I suppose, had been, before the *Standard* selected him for the arena of War Correspondence, the most industrious journalist in Fleet Street. He had an amazing capacity for work, and was possessed of a brilliant diction in its execution.

In the atmosphere of his comradeship, I profited by his complete knowledge of a journalist's craft. I have written of these distinguished Ladysmith friends of mine by the titles to which they all justly arrived in after days. Maxwell was knighted for counter-espionage work that he performed in the war against Germany. Maud, of the *Graphic*, unfortunately with so many others contracted enteric in Ladysmith, the full penalty for which devastating disease was deferred until two years later, when he died in Somaliland from causes that could be traced to it.

I arrived at Capetown about March 10th, and went straightway to the Mount Nelson Hotel. My first business was to find Amery, of the Foreign Department of *The Times*, who, when Monypenny had undertaken military duty, had been appointed to administer and control *The Times* news

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organization in South Africa. I found that Amery had a room in the *Cape Times* Offices, and there I unearthed the colleague and friend with whom I was to be so intimately associated for many years. Leo Amery is now a public man; there is, therefore, no necessity to enter into a detailed description of his personality. Let it suffice to say that this little man is possessed of all those virtues that make a man fair amongst his fellows. Nature has equipped him with the finest intellect; a kindly nature; resourcefulness; and a character that is absolutely impossible of being associated with a mean or questionable line of thought. I will not speak of his personal courage; that is but the sound bottom to those great qualities that have buoyed him into the highest flood of public life.

The Times in their cabled instructions had imagined that I would require a period of rest and good living to recoup from the rigours of Ladysmith. This was far from my intention, and as Amery was anxious about the news from the now important front—Lord Roberts' Grand Army had just entered Bloemfontein—I determined to lose no time in making my way to Headquarters.

The recuperation, therefore, at Capetown only lasted forty-eight hours. It was a pleasant rest, as Amery and Rudyard Kipling shared a table in the Mount Nelson dining-room, at which I made a third. It was nearly ten years since I had known Kipling in India. In that decade he had mounted the ladder of fame. Of the many successful men with whom my work has brought me in contact, Rudyard Kipling is one of the few who

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have improved their personal popularity by success. There is no gainsaying the fact that as a young man Kipling was not over-popular in India. That not altogether discerning censor—an Indian Station Society—had failed to take him to its bosom. The official hall-mark was not upon him. Besides, he had "lampooned" their most intimate inanities. He was just one of Macaulay's "profligate adventurers," as official India in those days classed all those who did not cash their monthly pay-sheets at the Treasury. But that which India could not appreciate or understand the outside world had justly acclaimed as genius. In these circumstances Kipling might well have had his head turned by success. Instead I found him a man of simple and unpretentious tastes. The small things of life were of interest to him as readily as the great. He had a wry way of looking at most matters, and when he was amongst men who earned their living by their pens he never failed to ask permission to annex any anecdote, or recounted incident, that might please his reproductive fancy.

I have been so engrossed in the side issue of Ladysmith and with my own personal adventures that I have somewhat omitted the perspective of the campaign as it presented itself when I met Amery in Capetown. Lord Roberts with the Main Army had just relieved Kimberley and occupied Bloemfontein, the capital of the Orange Free State. General Gatacre's Division, after operating in Cape Colony, was advancing through the southern area of the Free State in the direction of the main advance. According to Amery's digest of the

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situation very little was known of Gatacre's Division, and his suggestion was that I should make my way to Lord Roberts' Headquarters by way of Bethulie Bridge over the Orange River and Springfontein.

The mail train from Capetown, northwards, leaves in the evening.

I came to Bethulie Bridge accompianed by Coats, without adventure. As far as the existing railway communication was concerned, for the time being Bethulie might have been the end of the world. The Boers in their retreat had blown up the railway bridge, and a detachment of the Rand Railway Pioneers under Captain Hancock were engaged in making a deviation over the wagon bridge, which had been saved from destruction by the action of an intrepid subaltern in the Sherwood Foresters. I stayed one night at Bethulie Bridge. I sought the hospitality of the Boer farm-house where Hancock was billeted. I had the opportunity to realize how indefinite in this campaign was the line between enemy and friend. The two sons of the house, who were British subjects, had fought against Gatacre in his disastrous essay at Stormberg. They had taken on the liabilities of soldiers as substitutes to Free State burghers, less inclined to the excitement than themselves of lethal occasions and, at £30 a head, had become willing rebels.

At the end of the three months that their contract stipulated, they had doffed their "armour" and returned home as *loyal* British subjects. They entertained Hancock and myself with a recital of their deeds of derring-do between

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the intervals in which their plump sisters, not devoid of coquetry, strummed out patriotic Dutch airs on a hard-case piano.

As the completion of the railway communication right through to Bloemfontein seemed a remote contingency, I determined to hire transport in Bethulie.

Arriving at Springfontein, which was Gatacre's Headquarters, we found that liaison had just been reopened between it and Bloemfontein. Nevertheless I spent a day with General Gatacre. This was the third campaign in which we had met. I had always been drawn towards this man of tireless energy. I know the mental agony he must have suffered through his set-back at Stormberg. Amazing physical endurance is not always, for a soldier, its own reward. Gatacre was equipped with a mental agility and a fathomless source of bodily resistance, which led him into the fatal error of over-estimating the staying powers of those he commanded.

It is now common knowledge that he was offered up to the country by Lord Roberts as a scapegoat for the unfortunate series of regrettable incidents which after the lull at Bloemfontein marked the revival of the Boer resistance. This "sacrifice" to petulance in England, apart from its personal aspect, was most unfortunate and showed a lack of foresight and forward appreciation.

During those weary months that followed, when the elusive Christian de Wet wrung the nation's withers to the bone, we had sore need of a Gatacre. He would have caught de Wet by the throat and strangled him with his own hands rather than

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coquet with failure, in order to save his personal reputation. Gatacre was a single-minded man. Duty was his fetish. He would never have refused battle, to save his own petty prestige with the brass hats in Pretoria, as did so many another column-leader. It was this collective shirking of responsibility that in the main established de Wet's military reputation.

I arrived at Bloemfontein early in the morning. In those days it was a village, a little more pretentious than the majority of the Free State townships. Its Market Square and public buildings were respectable affairs. I went straight to the hotel where my colleague, who had come from the Modder with Lord Roberts' advance, was housed. This was Percival Landon. Landon had nursed the belief that the representative of *The Times*, who had been employed in a side-show in Natal, was joining him to be his personal assistant. He was much chagrined to find that the "shoe was on the other foot," so I immediately released him to return to Capetown to assert his claims with Amery. I had no time for arguments.

It seemed to me that the advance of the Grand Army upon the gold-fields of Johannesburg and Pretoria would be of outstanding interest to a public that was deeply mortified by a long series of unexpected and to them totally inexplicable military rebuffs, and that it behoved me to make very careful and special arrangements to be able to secure a greater freedom for cabled expression than the advanced field telegraphs could possibly permit.

The present Earl of Derby, then Lord Stanley,

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was our Press Censor at Army Headquarters. Lord Stanley took me in to see Lord Roberts. I had not told the Censor that I was no stranger to the Field Marshal. The kindly little man took me by the hand, and, in his first breath, expressed regret at my father's death. Incidentally Lord Roberts was breaking this news to me, as owing to my isolation in Ladysmith, and my subsequent rapid movements, my home letters had missed me. My father had been an old Bengal gunner, contemporary with Lord Roberts in the days of their service with the East India Company. When I was a boy at Simla the Commander-in-Chief had known me well. He sympathized with me and welcomed me as the son of a brother officer of his subaltern days.

He told me that it was his intention to place very few restrictions upon the movements of the Correspondents. He proposed to put them upon their honour, not to abuse the confidence that he placed in them. The Field Marshal was in optimistic mood, and I really think that he believed at that time that he had broken the back of the Boers' resistance. How wrong this estimate was, we were soon to have a dramatic enough example.

The Grand Army halted, unfortunately for the furtherance of the campaign, but fortunately for the newly arrived *Times'* Correspondent, for nearly two months at Bloemfontein. This halt gave me time to " learn the language " of my new surroundings, and to complete, if not perfect, my plans. In war, no plans can be perfect. Amery in Capetown was a tower of strength, and he filled my bill for coadjutors in the most lavish manner. I

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never knew when a new recruit to *The Times* staff might not turn up. They came in all shapes.

The first was an uncouth American, whose entire equipment was unbounded confidence and a tooth-brush. He flitted across the stage, and disappeared into the wings. I never saw or heard of him again. This did not perturb me, as I had already written him off as useless for my purposes. The next to arrive was Somers Somerset, who was destined to give me great values on many occasions. Somerset was followed by a dour Africander, conscientious to a fault in his efforts at journalism. The last of my helpmates to arrive was one Macdonnell, who had left coaching undergraduates at Oxford, to seek the bubble reputation at the cannon's mouth. Somerset and Macdonnell became fixtures with me, the Africander faded away after a short period of conscientious service with one of the subsidiary columns.

From the foregoing it will be seen that I now took myself seriously enough as a professional journalist. Was I not representing the greatest newspaper in the world, at the Headquarters of the greatest Army that England had then ever put into the field?

Coats was invaluable in getting my caravan together. This included both a first line and second line transport and the animals to establish a rearward pony relay service, between the advanced troops and the most forward telegraph office that could handle lengthy messages. I engaged another Africander, named Saunders, to work with Coats, and, as a matter of interest, I will state here that during the advance from

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Bloemfontein to the occupation of Pretoria, including the occupation up to the battle of Diamond Hill, Coats, Saunders and a third courier, a Boer called Davis, between them, employing both pony and bicycle express covered no less an aggregate than 2,463 miles carrying *The Times'* messages to the rearward telegraph receiving offices. Moreover, in spite of De Wet, and his *franc-tireur* assaults on the communications, they never failed in a single effort. I have in my diary of the period a complete record of each message as sent and the distances covered, and I venture to suggest that the united services of *The Times'* servants in the field made a "good delivery." The longest distance for one delivery was effected by Coats. This was from Pretoria to Bloemfontein, which the record shows to have been 290 miles.

Though the halt in Bloemfontein from the military standpoint was tedious, yet there was nothing tedious about it for the Correspondents. After the Boers recovered from the shock of Paardeberg, there was considerable liveliness just outside the Free State capital, and I had to be always on the alert. Moreover, I was a new-comer to an Army already reconciled to its establishment of penmen. A little group of three, of whom my colleague Landon had been one, had caught the little Field Marshal in one of his kindliest of moods, when he was flushed with his first successes, and had organized themselves into a little coterie of the élite, of which coterie in the bonhomie of after-dinner repletion, Lord Roberts had consented to be the patron. Myself I had no time for affectations of this nature which only tended

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to create discord and jealousies. Besides, I had too much in the way of duty to occupy my mind.

Bloemfontein began to teem with interests that were corollary to the military situation. Independent visitors arrived to help the Field Marshal with their advice on the establishment of a new government in the conquered capital. Lord Milner, the High Commissioner, came for a period. Mr. Rudyard Kipling also arrived as Lord Roberts' guest, and I find in my diary the following references to him: "March 28. Borrowed £50 from Rudyard Kipling;" and on the following day "went a long ride with Kipling and promised to take him out to see the next 'show' that is within reach."

At Lord Roberts' request the group of Correspondents, already referred to as the élite, founded a daily newspaper upon the ashes of the defunct Dutch *Bloemfontein Post*, which they called the *Bloemfontein Friend*. It was an original and most readable paper. Kipling entered into the spirit of the enterprise with a boyish enthusiasm and during the early issues was to be found at all hours in the Editor's room.[1] Although I did not claim to be one of the élite, yet I did my turn in bringing the *Friend* into its daily being, and

[1] I wrote a short article for the *Friend* upon the late George Steevens, to which Kipling contributed the following verse as a heading:—

G. W. Steevens.

"Through war and pestilence, red siege and fire,
Silent and self-contained he drew his breath;
Brave, not for show of courage—his desire
Truth as he saw it, even to the death."

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I remember on one occasion, as I sat either sub-editing *Reuter's* news-telegrams or passing proofs for press, that a great heavy individual thrust himself in upon me, and threw down a manuscript of most neatly written script, with the remark, "Mind I want that copy back again." I looked at the signature. It was "A. Conan Doyle." This was my first meeting with the creator of Sherlock Holmes, who was attached to the Army on some medical mission.

There was Winston Churchill also, something of a hybrid between a buccaneering officer of the South African Light Horse and the *leaded* Special of the *Morning Post*. I well remember his coming up to my room in the Bloemfontein Hotel, and sitting up with me until three o'clock in the morning, at which hour we were due to attempt some enterprise together. It will be remembered that this was the third campaign on which we had been together. The future Chancellor of the Exchequer was in confidential vein that night. I can see him now—Jodhpur breeches and all—as with hands well back on his hips, he strode up and down my narrow room, as he told me of many intimate things. These intimate disclosures were in confidence; but one piece of information that he imparted to me that night is not in the same category. It is nevertheless of very considerable personal interest. We were discussing "luck." It will be remembered that at this period of the Boer War, Winston Churchill had already been a prisoner with the Boers, and had made his escape from Pretoria and worked his way through to Lourenço Marques.

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It was out of the story of his escape that the emphasis upon the matter of "luck" arose. By climbing upon freight cars at night, and by crawling in the shadows, Churchill had accomplished some part of his journey to the Portuguese Frontier; but at last his brave heart even was beaten. Starving and dead beat, he came to the conclusion that it would be better to return to Pretoria and imprisonment than to die of exhaustion and exposure on the veldt. He made up his mind to surrender to the first Dutchman he met. It was dark and he saw the lights of a hamlet before him. He selected one lighted window and went to the door and knocked. The door was opened, not by a Dutchman, but by a Scotsman who had settled in the Transvaal after the Majuba Campaign. This Scotsman, though a nationalized burgher, saw Winston Churchill through and got him to the Frontier. If he had chanced upon any other house in the hamlet he would have fallen amongst thieves. Could an escaped prisoner have had a greater stroke of luck than this? It looks indeed as if all our actions were pre-ordained. If Winston Churchill had not made good his escape from Pretoria and reaped a bumper crop of publicity from it, the whole course of his career might have been different. That is the history as he related it to me in Bloemfontein, and as far as I remember it is not the same story as appeared in his book. How could it be—he had to protect the interests of his benefactor as long as the war continued.

On the morning following these intimate recitals, Winston Churchill and I went to view

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a "scrap" which was so secret an affair that the Correspondents were not invited to attend. We travelled together on Lord Roberts' special train, in the horse-box with the Commander-in-Chief's chargers, which was the only part of the train that the Provost Marshal's minions did not search for unauthorized passengers.

Gwynne of *Reuter's* and myself were, I believe, the only Headquarters' Correspondents who saw anything of the disaster at Sanna's Post. This was the theatrical coup by which Christian de Wet established his reputation as a predatory guerilla, and caught the unfortunate Broadwood's column without an advance guard in a cul-de-sac. I know how I happened to be there and I am not going to tell. But I do not know how Gwynne managed to be there. Anyway in point of time Gwynne beat me. He had come out with his dispatch rider, and before we met among the flotsam from the debacle he had already sent a tiny message, *ventre-a-terre*, back to Bloemfontein. I had done the same, but I was not as successful. Lord Stanley let Gwynne's message go through; mine which was longer and more detailed, was retained for further corroboration. This was one of the occasions when my habitual good fortune swung a trifle wide for me.

Gwynne and I, both satisfied that we had beaten the other, spent a curious but pleasant evening in a Boer farm. It was only a mile or two from the scene of the disaster, but a good 10 miles from Bloemfontein. The *chatelaine* of the homestead was a Mrs. Joubert, and she and her two blue-eyed and flaxen-haired daughters entertained us most

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hospitably. We danced with the girls, while the mother played for us until late into the night, and were each given a bed with clean sheets in the guest chamber. Mrs. Joubert's sons were "on commando" somewhere, she professed she did not know where. But she and her children evinced no trace of rancour. She appeared to us a courtly, hospitable hostess just as far as her resources went, anxious that youth should be served and yet, within three miles of her home, her sons, maybe, had been at deadly grips with our compatriots. This was before the first torch had been laid by the invader to the farmsteads.

I saw much of the late Lord Downe and his Foreign Attachés during the Bloemfontein period. Major von Luttwitz, the German representative, was a friend of mine of pre-war association in London. I understand that he came into prominence as a General during the World War, and even greater prominence as a *putsch*-merchant after the war.

My great ally, however, was Aziz Bey, the Turk. Aziz was what the French term a *type*, and used to accompany me on the march and into battle with the expressed hope that I might introduce him into some entanglement in which he could slip the irksome rôle of a neutral and become a combatant. Many good stories are told of Aziz, but the two best are these. During a period of inaction he went to Capetown. At the hotel he, not unwillingly be it said, was induced to play baccarat. It was not long before there was more paper in the bank bearing the name Aziz than even the largesse from Yildiz would liquidate.

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Aziz was undaunted. He was in uniform, so he drew his sword, and in less time than it takes to tell the story, he had cleared the room, and was not only in possession of his own signed paper, but of the bank's specie capital as well.

The other story has a less satisfactory ending for Aziz, as it cost him his job. After his campaign with us in the Transvaal, he was sent to Washington, as the Sultan's military representative. This, when the funds were forthcoming from the shores of the Bosphorus, suited his quaint temperament admirably. Opulence, however, was spasmodic. So Aziz took to the personal dunning of Abdul Hamid upon postcards with insulting epithets in Turkish script. One of these masterpieces, apparently, reached the august presence and Aziz was ordered home to face the bow-string. Nevertheless he bobbed up again after the Revolution, and I last saw him in Constantinople as sub-chief of the Stambul police. In this capacity he was wearing civilian kit, and was a poor effigy compared to my pristine friend the popinjay *sabreur* of the Mount Nelson Hotel.

Those who were sufficiently important to cross the threshold of that Holy of Holies, Lord Ypres' General Headquarters in France, during the Great War, will know something of the characteristics of the petty courts that arise round the Commanders-in-Chief of a large Army. To them congregate all manner of contemporary dignitaries and opportunists. Duties of State attract some; professional and personal interest is the impulse with others. Bloemfontein, therefore, was to me an education. Even in the modest ranks of my

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colleagues of the Press, peers of the realm and Rand millionaires rubbed shoulders with the professional journalists. Kipling's "Absent-minded Beggar" and our early reverses had fired national patriotism to an extraordinary degree. Everyone who could manage a passage to South Africa strove to be with the Grand Army, no matter in what capacity, during its avenging march into the Transvaal.

Without conceit or exaggeration, I can say that I found myself, as the Chief Representative of *The Times* in the Field, in a position of importance that I had not previously comtemplated in association with the duties of a War Correspondent. Not only had I to devise and direct a service of intricate ramifications, but I had to exercise a restraint and judgment both in the collection of my news and in the subsequent public expression of it. This placed my duties upon a totally different plane from that to which I had been used as *Reuter's* representative in my previous experience in small campaigns. I found that now I was consulted by the highest authorities on subjects affecting public opinion at home and the general deportment of the Correspondents in the Field. The Commander-in-Chief constantly sent for me, and accorded to me the privilege of easy personal access to himself, in matters in which I might find myself in doubt. The whole Army was extraordinarily kind to me. It was, I suppose, the evolution in my journalistic career. In India I had been the irresponsible boon companion of junior officers of my age and concerned mainly with the sporting aspect of war. In the Soudan

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I had been little more than a human camera of just one striking picture. But here with Lord Roberts' Grand Army, I found myself in a position, that while it claimed from me every faculty for alertness that I might possess, also necessitated considered judgment, tact, infinite restraint, and always a firm decision.

I had grown up.

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CHAPTER XIV

SYSTEMATIC DELIVERIES

LORD ROBERTS' Grand Army swept up to Pretoria on a broad front. Its various elements were on the move northwards on May 3rd, and a month later they were knocking at the door of the Transvaalers' capital. Lord Roberts' official entry into Pretoria was on June 5th. Though there was no pitched battle, yet there was desultory opposition at various points, notably the Vet and Zand Rivers, Germiston and Six Miles Spruit.

The recuperating halts on the northward march were made at Smalldeel, Kroonstad, Vereeniging and Johannesburg. My rearward services worked well, and *The Times* was kept in daily touch with the progress of the campaign. Somerset and Macdonnell intermittently maintained liaison for me with such forces, detached either to the right or left, that were marching parallel with the Main Army. At convenient intervals relay-ponies were left behind us with selected inhabitants, usually *predikants*, and in no case did I lose any of my *dak*-horses, either by enemy action or local commandeering.

At times we slept *en plein* air, at others we billeted ourselves in the houses of the inhabitants. Our commissariat worked well, as Coats

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was an expert sheep-slaughterer, and sheep's liver and kidneys react quickly to the elementary appliances of a camp kitchen. We were less successful with the cellar. The Kaffir giant, who drove the bullock team in my No. 2 cart, broached and absorbed no less than two cases of whisky and two cases of "medicinal" champagne, before we discovered, at Kroonstad, the leakage. His interior must have been spirit-proof, as in his actions he never appeared in the least the worse for wear.

Journalistically there was nothing very spectacular in this heavy British promenade through the Northern Free State and Southern Gate of the Transvaal. The Boers destroyed all the railway communications in front of us. Lord Roberts' Army, like all armies, marching on its stomach, halted at stated intervals, while the damages were temporarily repaired.

At the considerable town of Kroonstad we halted for ten days. Macdonnell was away with Ian Hamilton's column to a flank, but Somerset and I settled quite comfortably into the house of a Mr. Lintott. We bivouacked the caravan in this very polite burgher's garden, and his wife gave us each a bedroom, while his pretty daughters put vases of fresh-cut flowers upon our dressing tables. If all campaigning was as pleasant as our stay in Kroonstad, there would be no unpleasant memories of war.

Our host was a well-to-do Free Stater of British descent and although his sons perforce were in arms against us, he himself was of a very pacific temperament, and being an influential citizen,

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SAPPERS AT WORK MAKING LOW LEVEL BRIDGE AND DEVIATION OVER (KROONSTAD) VAALSCH RIVER.



THE TIMES CAMP, KROONSTAD.

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he suggested to me a means by which leading pacific elements of the Free State could be brought into touch with the Commander-in-Chief. I took him along to Lord Stanley, and some sort of indirect negotiations were initiated, but they were vitiated by the influence which the irreconcilable upstart Christian de Wet had brought to bear upon the fugitive President Steyn.

It is moderately certain, if De Wet had not had his initial guerilla successes against our communications, that public opinion in the Free State would have been ripe for submission to the inevitable.

While we were at Kroonstad, I had the opportunity of meeting many old friends from Behar. Lumsden's Horse, a Volunteer unit raised from Bengal planters, was in the vicinity. In the ranks were many of my old planter associates. They would come in batches to have a meal with me at our bivouac in the Lintotts' inviting garden, and were not slow to pay their attentions to my host's pretty daughters. Amongst them were two great friends of my youth. These were G.P.O. Springfield and Percy Jones. The former, as a captain in the Queen's Bays, was destined to be killed at Nery in France in 1914; while Percy Jones, leading a squadron of Indian cavalry, met a soldier's death in Palestine in 1918. Percy Jones was the son of Colonel Jones, V.C., of the 9th Lancers, who in the Indian Mutiny was cut down by mutineers outside Agra, and left for dead on the ground with no less than thirty odd sabre cuts upon his head and body.

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I was singularly fortunate in the success I had with my liaison colleagues and my dispatch carriers. Although all lateral and rearward communication was hazardous in the extreme, yet my men always succeeded in evading the parties of Boers, who were in constant operation against the flanks and rear of the Grand Army. I had grown genuinely attached to the gay Somerset, and it was not without apprehension that I would see him disappear into the blue of the veldt on some urgent mission, a solitary figure on a horse, and the certain prey to any ill-conditioned Boer sharpshooter if one happened across his way. Macdonnell on one of his missions did have a narrow escape and could show the path of a Mauser bullet that had followed the line of his belt and embedded itself in a book that was in his pocket. This book was not the traditional Bible!

Personally I had no warlike adventure until we were in the suburbs of Johannesburg. I was so busy collecting and sifting information, and concocting from it a finished résumé for my cables, that I could not afford the time to follow the more adventurous side of my calling.

The march from Kroonstad to the precincts of Johannesburg was really devoid of any startling incidents. The fighting at the Vaal River was trifling, but when we bivouacked on May 28th, one march short of the gold-mines, the whole Army was agog with excitement. The opinion was current that President Kruger by now, satisfied that the resistance of the Republics must be ultimately overcome, had given orders

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that all the gold-mines were to be treated to a devastating course of high explosives, and that foreign engineers had been imported to give effect to this purpose. Many sat round their bivouac fires that night with one ear open for the sounds of muffled explosions that would send the Rand mining shares down to zero.

Myself I was alone that evening. Somerset was detached with the Cavalry Division: Macdonnell was with the C.I.V.'s, with Ian Hamilton, operating on our left against the western flank of the Golden City.

I was scraping in the jottings in my diary by the guttering light of a candle, when I heard my name being called. My visitor was Abe Bailey, now Sir Abe Bailey, the Rand magnate. Bailey was accompanying the Army as a volunteer upon somebody's Staff. He had heard of my pony express, and he had come to ask if I would send a cable for him by it the moment we had secured the gold-fields.

It was, of course, out of the question that I could place a waiting courier at his disposal, but I told him that in the ordinary course I should be dispatching one of my messengers at the earliest opportunity after Johannesburg was occupied definitely. I could not guarantee the particular moment that I might consider it propitious for him to start, as that depended upon the many circumstances that might develop on the morrow. If, however, he caught me at the moment that I had decided to dispatch my own messages, I had no objection to the messenger carrying a wire for him. This arrange-

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ment was too indefinite for Abe Bailey's purposes, his requirements necessitating an instant service. I recall this incident to show the anxiety that existed regarding the safety of the gold-mines.[1]

I was up betimes on the following morning, and at 5 a.m. I was following the Mounted Infantry advance guard as it was occupying Natal Spruit, the point of juncture between the Pretoria–Capetown and the Durban–Pretoria lines. Here Gwynne of *Reuter's* joined me and we rode together. As soon as we reached the top of the ridge of hills that overlook the junction, we gained our first view of the Promised Land. The eastern end of the Gold Reef Valley—the Witwatersrand—burst into view. It was an impressive sight, a wonderful expanse of rolling downs, becoming a mass of mine-heads, and tall superstructures. Great mounds of tailings, cyanide heaps, and a veritable forest of smoke stacks intermingled with claim pillars and masonry walls. These masses of man-made expedients all owed their origin to Gold—Gold, the root of all evil. If that otherwise smiling valley-plateau had contained no mineral wealth, we should none of us have been there. It would still have been the home of the indolent Boer farmers and the hartebeest.

We had not much time for early morning moralizing. A train was standing in Springs' Station. It was a troop train that had just

[1] My diary shows that I dispatched Coats at 7.15 a.m. from Springs with 625 words of condensed cable to *The Times* on the morning after the occupation of the eastern end of the Gold Reef Valley.

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brought the Heidelberg Commando up from Laing's Nek. Our advance guard had missed it at Natal Junction by a matter of seconds. There might be time yet to cut it off. I was joined on the knoll by Captain Milne and McPherson of the Field Intelligence. We all galloped down to where Walker of the Gordons was manœuvring some Grahamstown M.I. in an endeavour to block the line. We were well in front of the train. We chanced the tailing heaps in front of us. Unfortunately the train had decanted the Heidelberg burghers. They were ensconced amid the head gear of the neighbouring mine. I do not to this day know how any one of us escaped, or how Milne was spared to command a British Army in Salonika and to be Chief of the General Staff and a Field Marshal, or myself to pen this narrative. I have ridden in many horse races, but I have never pressed the last ounce out of any horse as I did that day, riding to safety, neck and neck with Milne, with half a hundred magazine rifles pouring lead after us from a point-blank range.

That night the Main Army occupied Springs. Most of the Correspondents found accommodation in the hotel, and the rumours were that Johannesburg town would be formally surrendered to the Field Marshal on the following day. And so it happened. I started in the morning with Gwynne and Barnes, an American Correspondent, to ride into the Gold Reef Town. We were stopped at the night outpost line and told that we could go no farther: that an Armistice had been arranged until ten o'clock, when the

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Acting-Commandant of Johannesburg would surrender Johannesburg to Lord Roberts. Winston Churchill arrived while we were arguing with the examining post. He had ridden in from Florida where he had been with Ian Hamilton, whose command had brought off a successful action against General Louis Botha's Transvaalers at Doornkop.

My own liaison Correspondent, Macdonnell, arrived upon Churchill's heels. Macdonnell was ablaze with excitement and enthusiasm. He had been drawn into the fight with his friends in the C.I.V. and had advanced with their leading company to the assault of the Boer position. I could appreciate his feelings; have I not already recounted my own, in the similar circumstances on the Indian Frontier? Nevertheless, it was my duty heavily to remonstrate with him for taking unnecessary risks, and to point out that a Correspondent as a "casualty" was a serious financial embarrassment to the paper which employed him. In my heart of hearts I was proud of him, for I knew well that a Correspondent who avoided all risks was not a real asset and that no man, no matter his literary attainment, can make the description of a battle live until he had himself participated in those tremendous moments of human savagery.

The formal occupation of Johannesburg by Roberts' victorious Army was a moving affair. There could have been few amongst us who did not feel a lump in our throats, when on the Public Square the Dutch emblem was hauled down to be immediately replaced by the Union

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Jack. It all seemed so satisfactory. The mines, though many were flooded and deteriorated by disuse, had not been destroyed. Curiously enough, I was given in my hotel the room which had just been vacated by Judge Kock, junior. Judge Kock was the emissary from Pretoria, who was reputed to have been in charge of the proposed demolition of the Rand mines. I had met Kock after the battle of Elandslaagte, where his dignified old father, the original Judge Kock, had been mortally wounded. His son had then seized me by the hand, and, with tears in his eyes, had said that the tender kindness our medical officers had shown to his dying father had dried up in his heart all hatred for us. After his father died in Ladysmith, Judge Kock, junior, was permitted to return to his home.

I believe that this mine destruction threat was just empty bravado, since upon opening the wardrobe in my bedroom I found it stocked with the late occupant's supply of gun-cotton. It is true there was enough to have blown out the side walls of the hotel, but not sufficient to have seriously inconvenienced the gold mining industry. I have often wondered if this Kock "demolition scheme" was not a clever piece of financial propaganda in order to depress the market in the Rand mining shares in view of the coming emancipation. My connection with the Kock family did not end, however, with the removal by our Sappers of the Judge's "play-acting property" from my bedroom in the hotel. Fourteen years later Judge Kock's youngest brother enlisted in my regiment to fight for us

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in the Great War. As a boy of fourteen he had fought against us in the ranks of the Pretoria Commando.

We had three days in Johannesburg, and very pleasant days they were. Somerset came in from French's Cavalry Division which was now between us and Pretoria. We were both made temporary members of the Rand Club, and people who had only been names to me before our entry, invited us to lunches and dinners.

On June 3rd, Lord Roberts, leaving a brigade in occupation of Johannesburg marched his Army 10 miles on the road to Pretoria. On the following day the Boers tendered a half-hearted resistance at Six Miles Spruit, and the following morning I rode in to Kruger's capital, in the train of General Pole-Carew, commanding the Division of which the Brigade of Guards was the leading element. I actually rode between Major Maude and Captain Farquhar, both of the Division's Staff. Farquhar was most annoyed with me because, it now being winter and cold, I was wearing a rather dilapidated Indian *poshteen*, which he did not think a suitable apparel, even for *The Times*' Correspondent, in the retinue of a General of the Guards. Poor "Fanny" Farquhar was killed at the head of Princess Pat's Canadians in France in 1915, and Maude, the nicest man on earth, and one of the best soldiers of our time, was destined to die mysteriously of cholera in Mesopotamia, after he had conquered the Turks and occupied Baghdad.

It is not given to us often in our lives to ride

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at the head of a victorious Army into the enemy's capital. It was not to be expected that we should be acclaimed, as we were in Johannesburg, when the Peruvians,[1] ever ready to change their coats, went into ecstasies of excitement. We did not, however, want for spectators, and, if any impression remains marked, it was that of disappointment. The Dutch ladies of Pretoria had made up their minds that the capital was to be the scene of a desperate defence and a holocaust of fighting men. They had busied themselves for weeks in the rolling of bandages and preparation of dressings and a long period of outpoured sympathy with suffering manhood. It hurt their feelings that the entry of the *Rooineks* should be such a tame affair. The woman is not yet born who will rejoice when her most cherished hopes and expectations are dissipated into thin air.

One of the first incidents after the entry was Winston Churchill's dash to the Cage for Officer Prisoners at Mud Hill, where he had been interned before he escaped. Accompanied by his cousin, the Duke of Marlborough, he made his way to his former prison. The officer prisoners, descrying our arrival, disarmed their guards—the latter showing no resistance—and released themselves.

President Kruger, with his Government, had fled, but he had left behind his infirm old wife, over whom some decrepit burghers, as ancient

[1] Peruvians—a general term in South Africa for Jews and others of indefinite and foreign nationality who flock to the diamond and gold fields.

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as the good dame herself, had constituted themselves as a guard.

Lord Roberts made his formal entry early in the afternoon. The Union Jack was hoisted over the Raadzaal, and all the troops that were not employed in picketing the hills commanding the town marched past the victorious Field Marshal. We were all in the highest of spirits and the majority of us believed that to all intents and purposes the war was over. No one, I am sure, imagined that it would drag on for another two years. *The Times* certainly did not, as one of the first messages that I received was a "whip" from Amery, instructing me to curtail expenditure. Journalism is sensitive to the public taste. Moberly Bell, with his skilful fingers on the key-notes of expenditure and public interest, had cabled that the occupation of Pretoria and Johannesburg had reduced the curve of the popular interest in the war almost to a flat line. In reality the chief interest in the campaign had transferred to the lines of communication, as De Wet, Ben Viljeon and others of their kidney were now developing the *franc-tireur* business to a most uncomfortable degree. How would the Field Marshal counter this?

I at once set about the business to reduce my establishment. Somerset was quite anxious to return immediately to England.[1] Macdonnell, having tasted of the flesh-pots of Johannesburg,

[1] Somerset on his journey to Cape Town came in for De Wet's attack upon Honing Spruit. The description which he sent to *The Times* is, in my opinion, one of the most graphic records of a fight that has ever appeared in print.

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was content to start life on his own in that gilded *milieu*. Retaining Coats, I rolled up my private communications, and paid off the couriers who had served me so well. My caravan was easily saleable, and the profit by sales of mules and oxen covered the price of two horses that had foundered in message carrying.

I intended to carry on my duties single-handed, by remaining in touch with Headquarters, and for that purpose I rented a couple of rooms in the villa of a Mr. Alexander, a local merchant. I was not, however, left long in peace. Just after the engagement outside Pretoria at Diamond Hill, I received urgent instructions to proceed by the quickest route to China. The Boxer trouble had broken out, and the centre for sensational interest had changed.

I took the first available train berth, and, accompanied by Coats, travelled down to Cape Town. The journey was tedious, as, owing to the constant raids on the line, no trains travelled by night, and the mail trains were piloted by an armoured engine and truck.

Arriving at the seaport without adventure, I went straightway to call upon Admiral Sir Edward Chichester, who was in charge of the Naval Transport. I had been told that he had transports that would proceed direct from Table Bay to the Far East, carrying medium artillery. The cheery Admiral gave me the choice of a berth in one of two transports. The one was due to sail that very afternoon, the other on the following day. As I had only arrived early that morning, I thought that twenty-four hours

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would not make much difference and I decided to wait the extra day. Thereby I made one of the greatest mistakes in my life, as during the night Amery received a cable from Moberly Bell to say that *The Times* had secured the services of an officer of the Indian Army to represent them in China, and that I was to return to England immediately, as there was another mission awaiting me. It is one of the greatest regrets of my life that these instructions arrived in time, as thereby I missed the opportunity of seeing the Allied Armies in operation in the Far East.

I returned to England by the next mail boat. Thus ended my first visit to South Africa and my first war delivery in the service of *The Times*. If I had accomplished nothing else, I had at least established myself in the profession of Journalism.

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CHAPTER XV

BUCCANEERING

DURING the voyage home I picked up a book by George Steevens that had been published posthumously by the House of Blackwood. In it was a certain contribution that I had made to our journalistic siege baby—*The Ladysmith Lyre*—which Blackwood's Editor had attributed to Steevens' pen. Upon my return home I wrote a polite letter to the Publishing Firm, in which I pointed out that while I appreciated the honour of my work being mistaken for that of so distinguished an essayist as my late friend, yet I did not think that they would care to do foster-mother to me under false pretences. I received in reply from the then head of the Firm, the late Mr. William Blackwood, one of the nicest letters that I have ever had addressed to me. In it Mr. Blackwood apologized for the error, and as he was in London invited me to call upon him. This I did, and thereby made the acquaintance of one of the most courtly and sweetest old gentlemen that have ever crossed my path. By this chance mistake on the part of the Editor of Steevens' last book, I began a delightful association with the House of Blackwood, which only terminated some years later with the much re-

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gretted death of Mr. Blackwood, my original patron.

When, on my return, I reported to Printing House Square, I found that during my three weeks' voyage from the Cape, the necessity that had been responsible for my recall had evaporated. I nevertheless had the satisfaction of being told in turn by Mr. Walter, the Proprietor, Mr. Buckle, the Editor, and Mr. Moberly Bell, the Manager, that they were all entirely satisfied with my services during the past year. The expense, however, had been heavy, and Bell had now decided that the immediate future in South Africa did not warrant further extraordinary expenditure. Amery was under orders to return forthwith and the scheme in the Manager's mind was the preparation of a *Times' History of the War*. This work was to be edited by Amery, to whom, in the intervals, when I was not required for Special Service abroad, I was to act as a collaborator. After a round of entertainments, which included a visit to the proprietor's seat at Bearwood, when I met many distinguished people, anxious to hear first-hand news of the war, I was given a month's leave with the proviso that I must be available at short notice if I was wanted.

In September a note from the Editor's secretary sent me over to France, to write articles upon the French Manœuvres which were to be held in Eure et Loire. I was instructed to report to Mr. de Blowitz, the celebrated *Times* Correspondent in Paris, who had been commissioned to supply me with the necessary facilities from the French Ministry of War.

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I duly arrived at my hotel in Paris in the early morning, and telephoned my arrival to de Blowitz's private residence. This was an *appartement* in some suburb. The telephonic reply was to go straightway to this address. I found the *appartement* was on the third floor. The doorway was most imposing. It loomed out like a great coat-of-arms, and the supporters were two nude negresses in ebony-coloured plaster. A dignified valet, in the regulation sleeved waistcoat of yellow stripes, showed me into a magnificent *salon*, one end of which was partitioned off by a heavy *portière*. I waited some minutes, admiring the *objets d'art* with which the *salon* was overburdened, when suddenly a bell rang. The *portière* parted in its middle, and I beheld de Blowitz.

Imagine a little man, barely exceeding four feet in height, Dundreary whiskers grizzled with age, a smoking cap set jauntily on the side of the head with its voluminous silk tassel hanging over the left shoulder, a silk shirt embroidered with brightly coloured flowers all down the front, and white silk pyjamas stuck negligently into the tops of buff rough-tanned hessian boots, flower-embroidered to match the shirt, and you have the picture that presented itself to me that morning. I had gone to Paris believing myself to be a full-fledged representative of *The Times*. It was evident, however, that I had yet to learn how " to dress the part."

It was hard to believe that this comical little apparition was the bold and yet discreet journalist whom all diplomatists either feared or trusted.

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His affectations mattered little. He was most helpful to me, especially in those difficult days when in the French Army the affair of Fashoda meant much more than a memory, and when French officers had resigned their commissions, to take up arms against us in South Africa.

My friend Somerset, of the march to Pretoria, came with me, and from Chartres as a centre, we followed the mimic battles of the then red-legged soldiery of France. I have been to so many Manœuvres of the French Army that in the main the incidents and lessons that I deduced from them have been obliterated. One event, however, in this my first association with the Armies of France always remained deep-seated in my memory. A mock battle took place one morning in five square miles of a thick ground mist. The German attaché with whom I had struck up an acquaintance made the following comment:

"The Army which will know how to profit by an atmosphere such as this, will hold the key to conquest!" Often in the Great War the recollection of this chance remark came back to me, especially in the spring of 1918.

These Manœuvres were interesting upon another score. It was the first time that the celebrated French 75-mm. field guns appeared in public. The first time that umpires could mark a square on their maps as *tout annihilé* as the result of their *rafale* and barrage fire. Our own *riposte*, it will be remembered, to this terrific advance in artillery effectiveness was the makeshift Sir George Clarke's[1] spade-attachment. The French

[1] Now Lord Sydenham.

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authorities during these Manœuvres were so jealous of their secrets that their field batteries were accompanied by *gendarmes* whose special duty was to prevent close scrutiny of the guns by spectators.

On my return to London I found Amery ensconced in *The Times'* office with his head in his hands plotting out the scaffolding for his monumental History. It was indeed a monumental work: it ran into six volumes and took nine years in its completion. He had already embarked upon the First Volume, which was mainly historical and introductory, and I was set the task of laying the keel for Volume II, in which would begin the chronology of the stirring events in which we had both assisted. Even then we believed that we were within sight of the end of the war.

A little later, Lord Roberts handed over the Chief Command in South Africa to Lord Kitchener and returned to England. Then followed the recrudescence of the Boers' guerrilla activity, and interest began again to focus in South Africa. The country was tired of the war, and ever since the occupation of Pretoria had regarded events there with apathy. This apathy, however, turned to something like alarm, lest we should not really emerge victorious from the struggle.

General Louis Botha seemed to have infused a new resistance into the ranks of the burghers, and some imposing successes against our arms, both by his commandoes and those of De Wet, decided *The Times* that I should go back to South Africa, and do my best to enlighten them upon a situation

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that was becoming more and more inexplicable and obscure. It was suggested that I should combine with my duties in the Field the work of collecting material and collaboration for the purposes of the History and thus anticipate difficulties that might arrive under this head after the dispersion of the Army then in the field.

Early in Jauuary I found myself on a Castle liner *en route* for Cape Town. When we had cast off from the jetty side in Southampton Docks, we had known that Queen Victoria was seriously indisposed. As we made Madeira, we saw that the ensign of a British man-of-war at anchor there was at half-mast. Instinctively we knew that the Queen was dead. This knowledge brought tears to my eyes. It seemed to me that we—that our England—had lost some bond the like of which we should never know again. When the pilot came on board and confirmed our surmises, strong men broke down beside me.

A silly but curious incident happened to me on this voyage. It was such a bizarre affair that I may be forgiven if I put it upon record. When half the voyage was over, a fellow-passenger, to whom I had never spoken, came up to me and accused me of masquerading as myself. This must sound rather involved. The suggestion certainly put my sails aback. The conversation was something like the following:

"You are calling yourself Lionel James, and pretending to be the Correspondent of *The Times*. You are an impostor. I knew Lionel James in Calcutta, and you are not he. I see that you have foisted yourself upon Colonel Burn. I shall make

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it my duty to inform the Colonel that you are not the man you pretend to be."

By the time he had finished this rigmarole, I had had time to recover from my astonishment and to see some humour in the situation. I therefore asked this poisonous busybody to deal lightly with me, and not to give me away; least of all, I beseeched him not to expose me to our fellow-passenger Colonel Burn.

Murmuring something about protecting passengers from impostors, he started off forthwith to the Colonel, who, upon hearing his story, put him down as a lunatic, since we—Colonel Burn and I—had known each other for some years.

Like all the flotsam that the mail steamers threw up at Table Bay, I made the Mount Nelson Hotel my headquarters until I could take in the existing conditions with sufficient accuracy to formulate a plan. The only *Times* representative with the Armies in the Field was a Mr. Thorburn Bell, a nephew of Moberly Bell. I wired to him, if circumstances permitted, to come and meet me in Cape Town.

The result of our meeting was a division of our labours. It was a huge area that we had to cover. If the territory in which the British Army was then operating were superimposed upon the map of Europe, Thorburn Bell and I were responsible for collecting immediate information from a continent represented by Holland in the North, Marseilles in the South, while the Eastern and Western boundaries would have been Munich in Germany and Lyons in France. At the period Kitchener's plan was to exterminate the remaining resistance of the

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Boers by the concentration upon them of numbers of small punitive columns. To aid in the corralling process he was engaged in the construction of defensive lines of block-houses. The latter process, however, took time. Block-houses in the necessary quantity could not spring into being at the wave of a magician's wand.

The desire for peace was in the air. The more recalcitrant of the Boer leaders only kept the field. They were only able to do this by replenishing their military resources through such minor successes as they could effect against ourselves. Among the most successful of the Boer partisan leaders was Christian de Wet. It seemed certain that if by good chance this elusive filibuster could be captured or killed that the Boer resistance would collapse. There seemed to me only two circumstances in the present type of operations that would stir public interest at home. The one was the fate of De Wet, the other the declaration of peace, as a result of the constant *pourparlers* that were taking place between various of the hostile elements and Kitchener in Pretoria.

At this time De Wet had descended into the Colony and a formidable British concentration of mobile columns was taking place in the north of Cape Colony in order to finally quench this firebrand. I therefore decided to make the area of this concentration my own reporting centre for the time being. Thorburn Bell was to return to the hunting ground he had already staked out for himself. He was possessed of much of the journalistic instinct to which in an earlier chapter I attributed the success of Hensman of the *Pioneer*.

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Bell was a good bridge player, and had a *clientèle* among General Officers who recognized and enjoyed his quality in this respect. This valuable connection was not to be lightly disregarded.

I hurried to Hanover Road in the Colesberg area. Here I got so much conflicting information that I became entirely nonplussed. Hanover Road was little more than a dumping and refilling station. At this detestable spot I fortunately stumbled upon Colonel Robin of the New Zealanders. Robin had definite news. He had a telegram ordering him to report personally to Lord Kitchener at De Aar Junction on the following day. The question was: How were we to reach De Aar? Both Robin and I were *piétons*—I had left Capetown in a hurry not to miss this, as we hoped, final concentration against De Wet. I was without equipment. De Aar was not within walking distance and the R.S.O. told us that no down trains would stop at his station unless a troop train chanced to be directed there.

The mail train, however, was due to pass that afternoon. The R.S.O. would not stop it even for Colonel Robin. This R.S.O., like most of the officers at this period, was suffering acutely from "Kitcheneritis," a most paralysing complaint.

Robin and I intended to board that train. We wandered up the line to see if we could "dope" the distance signal. It was not in use. By chance we entered a derelict ganger's hut. I happened upon a box of fog signals. Here was the solution to our troubles. There was not an engine-driver on the Cape Railway system at that moment who did not congratulate himself each time he brought

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his train in safely that he had not exploded a contact mine. Robin and I lay in the shade of that ganger's hut for hours until we saw the mail train approaching. Up she came. There was a perfect *rafale* of detonating fog signals. The train pulled up and while the scared officials were scrutinizing the permanent way, aided and abetted by a quite to us unexpected quantity of gilt-hatted gentry, Robin and I, unobserved, climbed into a brake van. Thus under cover of nightfall we came to De Aar to discover that Kitchener's saloon had been tacked on to our mail train at the station before Hanover Road. Robin and I had indeed taken the bull by the horns! Anyway, we could congratulate ourselves that neither Kitchener nor any of his Staff had weak hearts, or had been permanently affected by the rude scare that the fog signals gave them.

When morning came I found that De Aar was alive with troops. In the fly-ridden station buffet I ran into Freddy Mercer, commanding the Chestnut Troop R.H.A. His command had come down by train from beyond Pretoria to take part in this great De Wet round-up. He suggested that I should get hold of his Brigadier and freeze on to him. This was General Bethune, whom I had known as the gallant leader of Bethune's M.I. I caught him just as he was leaving Kitchener's saloon with his final instructions.

"Come along with me, of course," was his cheery acquiescence.

"Look here, I want an Intelligence Officer—come and run my Intelligence for me!"

This was quite to my taste. It had been my

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intention to have taken the opportunity of seeing Lord Kitchener, but in view of Bethune's offer I decided that it might be injudicious at this moment. I did not imagine that "K" would quite stomach a Correspondent and Intelligence Officer under one hat. In which conjecture I was exceedingly right, as will presently be shown.[1]

I cannot claim that the ten weeks I spent with Bethune's Commando should be reckoned among the best journalistic deliveries that I have made. Unfortunately the operations, in which I participated from the word "go," did not effect the desired object of killing or capturing De Wet. It is true that they reduced him to the state of an almost solitary fugitive in a Cape cart—yet he escaped. The manner of his escape I will describe later. If only we had had a shade of better fortune, Bethune would have had the celebrated guerilla in his meshes, and then I, and I alone, from the journalistic point of view, should have had the best story of the war.

The experience, nevertheless, was of value to *The Times*, both directly in its letterpress and indirectly in the knowledge that I gained. Bethune's Brigade was a useful little force consisting of three mounted units, two of which were Regular Cavalry regiments, Freddy Mercer's Chestnut Troop, and a section of pom-poms. Bethune at one time had a cyclist detachment as well. The less said about this unit the better. Of all the most useless encumbrances in a war of movement are cyclists. Their life, like that of the butterfly, is about one

[1] This is Genesis of my story, *On the Heels of De Wet*, published anonymously by Blackwood in 1902.

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day. After that they become cycle-logged infantry, an encumbrance to themselves and to all with whom they come in contact, except the enemy, to whom usually they become a free issue.

Bethune's senior Staff Officer was dear old Jimmy Dunlop, one of the few men whose necks have been broken, and who have lived. Colonel Dunlop lived long enough to use expletive language concerning the Madras Lancers, who overrode him to do him this injury. The Brigade Major was the industrious and fearless Major Butcher, who as Sir Arthur Holland in 1916–18 was to command the 1st Army Corps in France. McNalty was responsible for Supply and Transport. All these pleasant comrades, I fear, have carried their honours into the next world.

As far as we were concerned the cast of the Kitchener net started from Richmond Road. We were to operate on the fringe of the Great Karoo. I can call to mind visually my impressions of this vast territory. On the morning of our first move I sat on the top of a great slab of rock to watch the commando pass out into the veldt. It had to cross what in South Africa is called a Nek. This saddle was typical of these South African passes. An execrable path winding over a low range of tumbled ironstone. Just one of those ranges which force themselves with sheer effrontery out from the level of the plain. Loose sugar-loaf excrescences which stud the sea of prairie with a thousand flat-topped islets, and weave the monotony of landscape peculiar to this great continent.

The rough post-cart track led down into a vast amphitheatre, so vast that Western Europe can

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furnish no parallel to it. If I had not known to the contrary, I would never have believed that the beautiful panorama which the morning sun now unfolded before me was in reality the theatre of hostile occasions. Away at my feet stretched mile upon mile of rolling Karoo and blue-grey prairie. True, it was punctuated and ribbed with stunted kopjes. And above them all the everlasting plain rose superior—until it was lost in an autumn haze, which no sun could master. Immense—a land without a horizon, a land every characteristic of which inspires a sense of independence and freedom. A land which breeds a sensation—an intoxication that can be felt, but cannot be described. Why should men fight in a land such as this? Surely there is room for all! The very animals of the field, ignorant of the selfishness bred of limited pasturage and restricted space, are docile and free from vice. The answer is as sordid as it is true. It is Gold. The Gold of Johannesburg brought us there. It was Gold that found me there in the position to moralize upon the pity of it all.

It was in this country and in this atmosphere that I passed the next two months. Even after many years the memory of it still quickens my pulse. The exhilarating air of the veldt, the freedom, the stirring adventure lurking in every dip and donga of that wind-swept, sun-dried, war-wracked expanse of steppe is perhaps worth the sordid store of gold for which we struggled. Who can forget those autumn mornings, when one's horse, inspired, no doubt, by something of the same exhilaration as was the man upon its back, races

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across the spongy soil; playfully shies at the half-hidden ant-heap; with cat-like agility avoids the dangerous bear-earth; when all seems strong, and young, and full of life; those exquisite moments when war itself is forgotten, until a rocket-bird falls slanting across the path and its plaintive note calls to memory the whine of the winging bullet that may yet still be our fate.

I found that my job was not all beer and skittles. I had to produce guides and reliable messengers at the shortest of notice. The General, who was a man of action, if ever there was one, expected me to supply him with "guides," with the same rapidity as a conjuror produces "white rabbits," and from an equally sterile source. Fortunately I had picked up a stout Africander trooper to assist me. He really belonged to Rimington's Guides. Local guides could only be secured by rigorous impressment, and the quest of them often landed my "Tiger"[1] and myself upon precarious ground.

One incident may be quoted as an example. We rode together to a farm-house about 3 miles off the line of march. It was a neat little homestead in a kloof. Leaving the "Tiger" to cover me, I rode to the dwelling-house.

A solemn quietness reigned over the whole kloof; not a soul was visible and the footfalls of my horse seemed strangely exaggerated as I approached the door. Presently a dog stirred, strolled out into the sunlight and, after the manner of its kind, barked furiously. It disturbed

[1] Rimington's Guides were called "Tiger" because they affected a strand of wild cat's skin in their head-dress.

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at least one inmate of the house ; a girl hurriedly opened the upper swing back of the door, looked at me, and pulled the shutter back with a bang.

This seemed suspicious and my hand instinctively went down to the wooden case of the Mauser pistol strapped to my holster. I threw the weapon loose and kept my hand upon the stock. To my imperious " Wie dar ! " the shutter was again opened. This time gingerly. The same face appeared, that of a plump, blonde, blue-eyed Dutch girl. She turned an impassive gaze upon me, while I taxed my limited knowledge of the *Taal* to ask for a drink of milk.

" Milk ! " the girl answered in passable English. " Yes ; I will get you milk. Just wait ! "

She seemed to be a long time finding the milk and I began to feel the situation as oppressive. I was experiencing that indescribable feeling which suggests that one's every movement is being watched by unseen eyes. Those who have walked up big game on foot will readily appreciate the sensation. Though I peered through the open door, I could discern no movement within, nor could my ears discover any suggestive noise.

Then the girl, walking noiselessly in her *veldt-schoen*, returned with the glass of milk. She opened the lower half of the door, and came, demurely enough, to the edge of the veranda. As I put out my hand to receive the glass, with one motion the girl dropped her elbow and soused the contents of the glass full into my face.

" Hands up ! " came the command from the open doorway in stentorian tones, and between soothing my startled horse and my wits, I saw,

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through a white mist of milk, that I was looking into the business ends of two rifles in the hands of rough-bearded burghers. The girl stood aside, convulsed in laughter.

The metal throat of a rifle, a few inches removed from the breast, has a considerable effect upon one. I was a captured man. But for a moment only. Something swished past me, and I saw a great star appear in the whitewashed plaster, just above my capturers' heads. The girl's laughter died out, the two Dutchmen ducked and instinctively made for the cover of the doorway. Rimington's "Tiger" had risen to the occasion.

Of a truth we were still in an enemy country.

The first throw of the net having proved abortive, we came post haste to Hope Town. Hope Town was the refilling station for several of the columns. Dishevelled and dirty we loped into the temporary metropolis of military strength just in time to get a dinner-table at the Hope Town Tavern. We were right amongst the aristocracy of Mobile Column leaders. At the next table sat that quiet, unassuming English gentleman—the gallant, thrusting, never-tiring Plumer. A small, spare man of dainty gait and finish, yet moulded in a clay that has shown no flaw in the rougher elements of his calling. Pilcher was there—Pilcher the man on wires. Hot-headed perhaps, yet withal crafty in war, worthy representative of the race of young soldiers that the Nile had nurtured for us. Pilcher's lamp, and those of the other column-leaders who were there, were to burn out before the Great War. But not so Plumer's. Little did I think as I listened to him, in bantering

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colloquy with my General, that I would live to see him blasting German hordes from off the Messines Ridge in France, and to obey his behests under the shadow of Venice in the plains of Northern Italy.

We had fought—we had devised, and also suffered ambuscades, but we had failed. There was still one more chance. De Wet was still south of the Orange River. By rail and road columns were to concentrate in fevered haste, to hammer the last nail into his coffin. Half my nights were spent in decoding the messages marked "Secret," that told of Haig here, De Lisle there, Bruce Hamilton over the way, and the long list of others elsewhere. Bethune pondered the map. They offered him trains. He put his finger on the map and said, "That is the spot we will catch him. No trains for me!"

And so we marched away into the blue under forced draught. Every element seemed to have been arraigned against us. Supply failed; horses and mules foundered; an unprecedented thunderstorm converted the veldt into a morass; maps there were none, nor, if there had been any, would there now have been time for them to be supplied. Halt—we dare not halt, time was so precious that there was barely time to sleep. In spite of every wait-a-bit thorn, and they were many and fierce, the column made the tryst.

The stop was detailed, and marched silently away in the darkness of the night. The Riet River was in flood, thank God for that. This was one big weight on our side, to counterbalance the many that had come into the scale against us. There was only one place that De Wet could cross

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the swollen Riet—Kalabas Bridge—and our stop would be there before daylight. Haig to the right of him, Knox to the left of him, we ourselves behind him, and Plumer coming up post haste upon our tracks. The information was certain—confirmed from every reliable source. The war was over—and the great story for *The Times* would be mine, mine alone. My rivals were welcome to it second-hand.

Tragedy of tragedies. The earth was *not* stopped. The stopping force had lost its way. Too late it arrived at Kalabas Bridge. Half an hour before De Wet, President Steyn and their attenuated posse of burghers had crossed the bridge into the security of the rough country beyond. It was a stunning blow.

I am not ashamed of what I shall say now. When the truth dawned upon me in all its nakedness, I sat down upon a stone and almost sobbed. Pursue, we might just as well have pursued a will-o'-the-wisp. Besides, we had foundered ourselves to effect this final throw. In war, alas, one needs to be a philosopher!

In view of the nature of the Boer resistance, Lord Kitchener issued orders that the whole countryside was to be swept of cattle and inhabitants. The former were brought into a common pool for disposal, and the latter were collected into concentration camps. After the escape of De Wet Bethune's column was employed in these sweeping duties, until it came to Bloemfontein to refit. On arrival at Bloemfontein, I was summarily discharged from my local appointment as Intelligence Officer to the column. It had come

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to the knowledge of Headquarters that I was thus employed, and peremptory orders reached my Brigadier that this employment was to cease forthwith.

The *Irade* from Pretoria had anticipated my own intentions. It had suited me from a journalistic standpoint, to be intimately connected with the De Wet hunt. Now that this was over, my duties took me into a larger field.

Peace negotiations had opened again. Lord Kitchener had had a meeting with General Louis Botha. The terms had been agreed between them. Botha, however, maintained that he was not empowered of himself to accept them, that he could not do more than present the decision for ratification by those Boers still in the Field.

After my dismissal from the Army I made my headquarters, temporarily, at Bloemfontein. Through tame Dutch channels the outcome of the terms to which Botha had given his assent, and which were now being referred to the fighting elements, came into my possession. This was information in which I knew the public at home were showing a keen interest. Unfortunately Lord Kitchener did not like his negotiations to be open to discussion in the Press, while they were still in the indefinite stage. Instructions had been issued to all censors that no reference to the official conversations with General Botha were to be allowed in telegrams to the newspapers.

Here was one of those difficult quandaries in which the Correspondent unfortunately often finds himself. On the one hand is his paper thirsting for news; on the other, himself with the required

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information, but paralysed from all action by official embargo. I set myself down seriously to think. Light came to me in the following manner. De Wet, after his escape, had travelled north. He was in touch with Botha. He was now said to be in the Harrismith district, where a plebiscite of the burghers still in arms was reported to be in process. It was known that De Wet was opposed to the acceptance of the terms. In fact the résumé of a bellicose speech that was attributed to him was before me. I carefully edited this speech and wove into it the terms that were under discussion. I flatter myself that it was a skilful piece of work, since the Censor affixed his signature to it without demur. The question was: Would the Foreign Department in *The Times* penetrate the disguise?

Three days later the terms were refused, and were officially communicated. Alas, my cable had not achieved more than its place in an item in the daily news from the war. In the leading article which *The Times* discussed the failure of these peace negotiations, appeared the sentence: "It will be seen that the actual terms were not dissimilar to those which our Special Correspondent reported in a speech made to the burghers by General De Wet," or words to that effect.

I now felt that my place was in Pretoria. I went to the capital and took a furnished house in Vermeulen Street and busied myself in collecting material and collaborators for Amery's History. I again came into close contact with Lord Kitchener. In fact, during the three months that I made Pretoria my headquarters, I saw him two

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or three days a week. Kitchener was now quite a different man to the Sirdar I had known during the Omdurman Campaign. He also had on his personal staff two very old friends of mine. These were Colonel Birdwood and Captain Frank Maxwell, V.C., both close companions in my campaigns on the Indian Frontier. Birdwood is now a Field Marshal and Commander-in-Chief in India. Maxwell, alas, as a Brigadier, was killed at the head of his men on the Somme. Kitchener was not only friendly to me but hospitable as well, and he often referred to the days when as a boy I had met him in the house of a mutual friend. A friend who had also joined the vast majority. Days were very pleasant in Pretoria. Basil Blackwood was Press Censor, and having tastes in common, we did many things together.

Kitchener encouraged social intercourse between the junior officers whose duties detained them in Pretoria and the Dutch families. He seemed to be of the opinion that this intercourse would create an atmosphere contributory to peace. Nor did the fair ones in the town turn an altogether cold shoulder to the addresses of the British Officer. In manners and appearance he compared well with their own men-folk. I well remember a concert that included a strong chorus of Dutch damsels. Although, from patriotic motive, they one and all remained seated when "God Save the King" rounded off the programme, yet one and all they permitted a British Officer to escort them to their homes.

This friendly intercourse, nevertheless, had its pitfalls. South Africa was still at war. I remem-

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ber the case of one officer, who was certainly old enough to have known better, who narrowly escaped a court-martial, and was packed off post-haste to his regiment in India, because he had told his inamorata of the destination of a British convoy. The damsel's innocent request was that she might send a parcel of linen to her *fiancé*, who was still in the Field against us, but would know how to collect his clean shirt from the destination to which she had addressed it.

No man in South Africa hated the concentration camps more than the Commander-in-Chief. They were forced upon him. The anomaly of the whole military situation irked him greatly. It was so incongruous, and yet so essentially British, that we should not only be supplying our enemy with arms and munitions, but also be supporting their families and aged dependants at the same time.

Although Pretoria was my headquarters, I made constant excursions when my information pointed to special interests. I journeyed down to the Colony, to do a tour with Colonel Douglas Haig's group of columns: I spent a couple of weeks "on trek" with Lord Basing's column. I made several trips on armoured trains, and I went constantly to Johannesburg to keep touch with developments there. Thus the war dragged on through South Africa's winter months until in August I was ordered home to London. England seemed to have accepted the Boer War as a fixed incubus, and as a newspaper interest it was entirely dead.

But before I shake the dust of South Africa from off my shoes for ever, I must tell you one strange story. It has nothing to do with my

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journalistic deliveries, but it will interest those who are inclined to the occult. I am not psychically conditioned myself, but the following is of my personal knowledge. The daughter of a wealthy family in Johannesburg was engaged to an officer in a British cavalry regiment. The girl was in Johannesburg, her *fiancé* was with a column operating in Cape Colony. One evening at dinner the girl went suddenly white. She left her place at the table saying, "—— has been wounded. I am going down to Cape Town by the mail train to-morrow!"

Nothing would dissuade her. She left for Cape Town the following morning. Arrived at her destination (it was a three days' journey under the conditions of the war), without a question or instructions she took the train to Wynberg, and from thence went straight to No. 2, Base Hospital. Meeting the matron she said simply, "You have Captain —— here. May I see him?" The matron shook her head sadly. Captain —— had died of his wounds during the night. I offer no comment. I only state the facts.

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CHAPTER XVI

STILL BUCCANEERING

I HAVE tried to impress upon the reader that this story is primarily the record of my work as a War Correspondent. I will therefore omit any of the duties I performed at the Offices of *The Times*, when I was not employed abroad. As far as I was concerned 1903 was a dull year until the summer. I was then bundled off to the United States. I shall make reference to this mission in a subsequent chapter. On my return from America I found that that hardy annual, "Trouble in the Balkans" had turned up again. I had barely time to unpack my suitcase before I was in the Oriental Express bound for Sofia.

I stopped off at Vienna to have a day with Mr. Wickham Steed, *The Times* versatile representative in Austria-Hungary, and a future Editor of the paper. Wickham Steed had been instructed to inspire me with the proper atmosphere, in case the tension in the Balkans should develop into an armed conflagration.

Steed interested me as much as any of my colleagues that I had met hitherto. In all but his mentality he first gave me an impression of nervous effeminacy. I marvelled at his concise and dogmatic summary of contemporary Balkan politics. But I was more astonished as I sat

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with him in his flat in the Schwindgasse late into the night. He seemed to be a master-mind of information and his room the receiving exchange of all current events. To solve a point in doubt he would at once ring up Budapest or Prague. Distance was nothing to him. His telephone was in constant agitation. Now it was a counsellor from the British Embassy; then it was Saunders, *The Times* Correspondent in Berlin; the next inquirer would be from the Ball Platz, the Foreign Minister himself perhaps. There was no end to it or to Steed's vitality, and when at a long last I was released to return to my hotel I was obsessed with a sense of my own journalistic deficiencies.

In due course I came to Sofia, and took up my quarters at the Hôtel de Bulgarie. This hostelry was teeming with journalistic vultures like unto myself. It was strange, but I seemed to have come among an entirely different flock to those with whom I had been associated with on previous occasions. The swashbucklers were not here; but an army of pseudo-diplomatists, chief amongst whom was Dr. Dillon with a brace of lady secretaries. As soon as I was settled and presentable I sought out my colleague, Mr. J. D. Bourchier. A giant Bulgar in national costume stood, sentinel-like, athwart his door. From within I heard the melodious strains of music. Not until there was a pause in the symphony would the fierce barbarian allow me passage.

I found the celebrated Bourchier, freshly shaven, but as yet unwashed, sitting at an open piano. He smiled benignly upon me, and intimated that it was against his custom to receive visitors before

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eleven o'clock in the morning. I explained quietly —as quietly as one could explain to a man as deaf as was Bourchier—who I was, and the object of my call. When he realized that I was, in fact, a colleague, he burst into adverse comment upon the sagacity of the Foreign Department of *The Times*. He said that he had informed them that there was not the remotest possibility of any war: that they were always cramping his own activities, by foisting ancillary workers upon him, and that, however inconsiderate, prodigal and imprudent *The Times* might be, he was very glad to see me and he would see that I was made a temporary member of the Union Club forthwith. I was then able to get a word in, as the dear old gentleman had to breathe.

As soon as Bourchier found that I had no desire to infringe upon his own special province, he was full of helpful suggestion. A journey down the Turkish-Bulgarian Frontier was proposed, and in a pair-horsed phaeton I set off to cover the 60 kilometres to Kustendil. It was at Kustendil that I came by Reginald Wyon and Dimitri. But for my chance meeting with these two I should, for the purposes of this record, have dismissed the story of my first visit to Bulgaria in a single line.

I do not profess to know what travelling in Bulgaria may mean nowadays, but twenty-five years ago, if you penetrated into the country you left all standards of European comfort behind you. In Kustendil I installed myself in a tavern that was nothing better than a Turkish *han*. There were three beds in my room, which was about 12 feet square. In Bulgaria travellers are gre-

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garious and in the hostelries accommodation is by the bed not by the room. To insure isolation I hired the entire sleeping capacity of my chamber. The usual Bulgarian meal of stewed goat, swimming in yellow grease, was served to me in the evening. As I was trying to assimilate it Dimitri blew in upon me. Dimitri was a Greek. I have had considerable experience of Dimitri during most of my experiences in the Balkans. He is worthy of a short description. A Macedonian Greek, flashing of eye, replete in good humour, and gesticulation, and optimist of optimists, Dimitri was an excellent body-servant. On this the occasion of my first introduction to him, he tried to make me understand in English, French and German, all of which languages he spoke execrably, that he had a master in a neighbouring *han* who was anxious to have speech with me. As, however, he would be exact in naming his patron, and the pronunciation of Wyon presented such insuperable difficulties to him, I failed to comprehend his good intentions, and dismissed him as an amiable lunatic.

Thus it was that I did not meet his master until the following morning, when an immense Englishman of about 18 stone enveloped me in an overpowering handshake, and introduced himself as a brother penman. This was Reginald Wyon, the Vienna Correspondent of some London Daily, who had come to Bulgaria, apparently, with the express purpose of setting the Border alight. In those days, when there was no school of journalism, one often wondered by what means so many strange types drifted into the profession. I have already

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told you how it happened to myself. With many others it must have been the same necessity that guides the feet of otherwise modest Frenchwomen to Buenos Ayres. Wyon had been a professional operatic singer—a baritone. That is how he came to speak German, French and Italian. I forget what had shortened his stock as a singer. Whatever it was, he had drifted into journalism, and he told me that his orders were to supply to his paper in London at least two startling sensations a week from Vienna.

We agreed to journey together, and I must admit that Wyon made a very cheery companion. By easy steps we came to Rila Village. Here we were in the centre of the Macedonian Comitaji preparations. Many loud-voiced patriots were gathered here to swear fealty to some tinselled emblem of hereditary rights or hatred. Personally I considered it all cheap and theatrical advertisement—the word propaganda had not come into use in those days. But it was what Wyon revelled in, so we stayed there two days, and then journeyed on to the Rila Monastery, where we were informed that Bulgarian refugees from the Turkish abominations and oppressions were being housed by the monks.

Rila Monastery is a wonderful affair. I am not going to describe it to you. Every visitor to Bulgaria has done that. We were, however, most nobly entertained by the brotherhood, and we had a room in the monastery, the window of which looked out as if it were from the sheer cliff side over a wonderful expanse of mountain scenery. The Oratory was certainly impressive, and doubt-

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less gave Wyon much munition for his atrocity stories, since its walls were decorated with the most amazing frescoes, of what we poor erring humans can expect if we chance to miss the entrance to heaven. In those days you could see there, to each cubic foot of mural painting, more wretched sinners being toasted by devils armed with pitchforks than even the accepted iniquity of the world would suggest. It is significant that in all cases the unfortunate sinners were women, which shows what the monk artists pretended to think about it.

Our intention was to return to Sofia by way of Samakov, where we learned a most redoubtable Macedonian liberator was recuperating before he reopened his game of "tip and run" with Turkish soldiery across the border line. The idea came to us that it would be a pleasant expedition to take a bee-line across the back of the Black Mountain, direct from Rila Monastery, and thus obviate a further tedious promenade in a post-phaeton over, always abominable and often cobbled, roads. Dimitri was deputed to make local inquiries, while we ourselves interviewed his Holiness the Abbot. The consensus of opinion was that it could be done, but that the season was passing late, and that an early storm would make the passes impracticable. The weather looked settled, so we determined to attempt the passage. Dimitri, always light-hearted, never thorough, arranged for the hire of a local guide and two ponies, one to carry our baggage, and the other the ex-baritone, if, and when, he found shanks' mare insupportable. Myself I was content to make

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the journey on foot. The animals were to be surrendered at the address of the owner's agent in Samakov.

We made an early start. That was necessary, as the climb would be severe and the way was long. It was a bright late autumn morning, but the Abbot, as we took leave of him and pressed our contribution to his order into his hand, shook his head, and repeated the somewhat sombre warning that the season was passing late for safe passage of the snow passes.

All went merrily for the first two hours. We toiled up the side of a mountain with all view blinded by a thick pine forest. It was rough going, and the led ponies were constantly baulked by derelict tree trunks which lay across the path. As all evidences of usage as a track began to dissipate, I began to think these lay across the path somewhat suspiciously. When we were three parts up the mountain it was obvious that our guide had lost his way, even if he had ever been in possession of it. Dimitri was called upon to try his knowledge of Bulgarian upon him. This effort apparently so terrified the guide that, without further ado, he bounded down the hill-side, and was eternally lost to us.

By this base desertion we were left to our own resources. We had the choice to return ignominiously to the hospitality of the monastery or, trusting to the compass I had in my pocket, to adventure the journey alone. Dimitri, who was nothing if not an optimist, maintained that there was nothing to make a fuss about, and that in mountains, if there were a path, it would be easily

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discernible in the snow. Dimitri's logic, false as it was to prove, decided us and we clambered up to the summit of the wooded divide. At the top an entrancing vista presented itself. We had reached a vast upland plateau. This tableland stretched away for several miles, slowly rising until from its northern extremity rose the great snow-bound ridge that we must cross before we could drop into the plains of Bulgaria proper. Down on to the plateau we found the semblance of a goat-track. It was rough going, but not really difficult. The solitude of it all was most impressive.

By midday we were well into the centre of the tableland. The sun was shining brightly, but there was a biting wind from the North. Perhaps it was this wind which had caused the good Abbot of Rila to shake his head. Wyon and I were tramping on foot. Dimitri, riding one pony, was leading the other. Suddenly Dimitri gave a shout. He had viewed a shepherd's hut. We followed the path that led to it. It was just a sheep track. We suggested that the hut would make a convenient spot at which to lunch. It was a premature suggestion. Lying in the doorway, with glazed eyes staring at the heavens, lay the corpse of a peasant. His throat had been cut from ear to ear, and so recently that the hæmorrhage from the fatal wound was not yet much discoloured.

We hurried forward from the spot in horror. It is not comforting to stand face to face with murder and sudden death in a great solitary waste. We put a league between us and the hut before we began to think of our belated repast. As we

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sat, now on the fringe of the snow carpet, Dimitri informed us that the unfortunate whose body we had just seen was probably the victim of some blood feud. Blood feuds were common between sept and sept among these mountain tribes. Logical in all his views, he maintained that it could not have been the handiwork of robbers, as the victim was too poorly clad to have invoked a cupidity so desperate. As we finished our frugal lunch I noticed that it had become colder, that the sun was now overcast, and that the wind, still more biting, came in heavy bitter gusts. The weather was changing. It behoved us to hurry forward. We were in no place in which to face a blizzard.

In our hurry to leave the hut and the gruesome remains of its late occupant behind us, we had just followed a sheeptrack; we were now faced with a steep mountain side, that showed no definite signs of a pathway. At any cost we must ascend, and after a brief survey we decided to make a diagonal ascent towards a Kol some thousand feet to our left. If there were a pathway we could not discern it, but with luck we might strike it higher up.

We toiled on for an hour, and then I began to have apprehension for the staying power of my compatriot. Wyon, as I have said, was a heavy man; moreover, he was not a fit man. That is to say, not fit enough to sustain the effort that I now knew that we must make, if we were to clear the pass before the threatening blizzard fell upon us. Every few hundred feet he had to sit and rest. At last I had to hoist him upon the pony,

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and trust to Providence that both would not go slithering down into some abyss beneath us. Even Dimitri, cheerful optimist that he usually was, began to scold, and had the temerity to suggest that it was all my fault, and that if *his* advice had been followed we should not be in our present predicament. By which *volte face* you have a very true reflection of the Greek character.

It was now nearing evening and the light would shortly fail us. I could envisage what would be our fate if the snow, now threatening, fell, and we became night-bound. We were nearing the knife-blade of the ridge, when suddenly Wyon collapsed. He maintained he could go no further. The brandy flask was empty, and the first flakes of snow began to fall.

I cajoled: I threatened, but my companion was "beat." Come what would, he said he must rest. Instinct seemed to tell me that though we had blundered up to the saddle by a path of our own making, yet there must be a pass somewhere in the vicinity. I left Dimitri to minister to Wyon, and struggled on to search for it. Suddenly a flock of moufflon came bounding over the crest-line towards me. Their astonishment at meeting me would have been amusing if the circumstances had been different. But the advent of these startled mountain sheep filled my heart with hope. I was sportsman enough to know that something had scared them from the other side of the razor-back. Then the tinkling of a bell caught my ear. It must be either a mule bell or a bell-wether. Either would mean a human being. Muleteer or

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shepherd. A human being at least could guide us to shelter for the night.

It was a mule train. A convoy to Comitajis in Macedonia, pushing forward in frenzied haste to be over the saddle before night, with its now certain snowfall, was toiling up the pass. In our anxiety to escape from the dead peasant we had missed the track from the desolate hut, and had made our cast for the ascent at an angle acute to the proper path.

The Comitajis could not wait, they were travelling against time, and knew the dangers of delay; but they proved good Samaritans and they left with us Angelo. Angelo was a Macedonian Bulgar, and was one of the most engaging personalities alive. He attached himself to me with that same dog-like fidelity that had been the charm of Baj Mahomed, my Orakzai courier on the Indian Frontier. Angelo undertook to guide us down to Samakov. It was by now snowing quite fast, but if we did not delay we would be out of the blizzard area in a few hours. Hope is a great restorative. Wyon had collapsed when he had given up hope. Now that it was revived, he revived with it, and he made the necessary effort.

It was three o'clock on the following morning when we reached Samakov. Angelo took us to a *han* which was patronized by his brand of Comitaji. I had walked every foot of the way from Rila Monastery, and my physical exhaustion was such that I could neither eat nor sleep. I often wonder what would have happened to us if that belated convoy had decided not to risk the last passage of that pass that night. Angelo maintained that

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he had been specially commissioned by Providence to watch over me, since even in the best of times convoys only took that route about once a week, and it was only a very special urgency in Macedonia that decided this one to start at all.

In those days one recuperated quickly. Wyon and I remained in Samakov a few days. Sponsored by Angelo, I interviewed the principal Comitaji leader. I forget his name, but in those days in local estimate he was considered a potential Ghengiz Khan, who would create a Macedonian-Bulgarian Empire, in which every Turk should be a helot.

We were most hospitably entertained by a Captain Paravanof, who commanded a Bulgarian Mountain Battery, and who insisted that I should pass his battery in review. They were most friendly, these simple Bulgarian folk in those days. It is no surprise that my colleague Bourchier loved them, and that by turning against us in 1916 they broke his heart.

At Philippopolis Reginald Wyon and I parted company. Wyon was returning to Vienna. I had instructions to go to Constantinople. I took Dimitri with me, and the faithful Angelo insisted in coming with me to the Turkish Frontier.

My visit to Constantinople and a subsequent sojourn in Adrianople were interesting enough to me at the time, but have no place in this record. Early in December I received an urgent command from Moberly Bell to return to London. The war barometer in the Balkans was rising—it was falling ominously in the Far East.

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CHAPTER XVII

A GREAT ADVENTURE

IN the summer of 1903, as has already been stated, I was sent by *The Times* to America. The object of this mission was to make a study of the United States Army and military training establishments. I found myself in New York just at the time when the International Yacht Race was taking place. Wireless telegraphy was then in its infancy. There were several experimentalists in the development of the Hertzian Wave in the field, and certain of the New York journals were utilizing the developments of these scientists, as then perfected, to report the progress of the *Shamrock* and its rival, minute by minute, through the medium of model boats displayed in front of their respective Editorial buildings. I forget the names of the various transmitting media employed, but it occurred to me then that wireless telegraphy might, in certain circumstances, be well applied to the form of journalism in which I specialized. A comparison found that the system, as at that date improved by a Dr. Lea de Forest, gave journalistic results that left all rivals at a standstill.

I was not able while in America to come into touch with Dr. de Forest himself, but I met a man also interested in the improvements in

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wireless that he had effected, and I learned that while all his rivals had confined their energies to the accepted method of a *cohera*, De Forest had advanced further and had invented a receiver that took the transmissions orally. My informant claimed that the reason for the success of the De Forest system, in the reporting of these particular races, lay in the fact that while the disturbances caused by his rivals vitiated the several receiving *apparati*, the De Forest system was able to detect, orally, its own spark, and moreover was able to receive at the rate of thirty or forty words a minute, as against the five or six words a minute attained by all the other competing systems. These facts made a considerable impression upon me, and I had stored the information against any possible opportunity that might arise in the future which would permit of its application to my particular branch of journalism.

On my return to London from the Balkans I was told to hold myself in readiness to proceed to the Far East at instant notice. The diplomatic situation between Russia and Japan was extremely delicate, and Moberly Bell still hoped that a rupture might be avoided and *The Times* spared the expenses of another great war. Nevertheless I had instructions to be prepared and to make such preliminary arrangements as I considered necessary.

I had by no means forgotten my intention to apply wireless telegraphy to my craft. The very character of any hostilities that might eventuate between Japan and Russia in the

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Far East seemed from a study of the maps to promise special facilities for the application of this new adjunct in the rapid transmission of news.

At the moment, however, Moberly Bell was in no mood to be approached in the matter, since he would, I knew, jib at any proposal that gave promise of extra expense. Nor had I the project in a form definite enough to lay before him. My four years' service to *The Times* had taught me the best method of approach to the Manager. He could not be rushed into extravagances upon some mere hypothesis. Given a concrete plan, however, whether speculative or otherwise, if he could see the possibility of results that would enhance the value of *The Times* as a newspaper, he was "your man" at once. And once having given his assent, he would stand by you through thick and thin, no matter how caustically he might gibe at you in his private correspondence or become querulous where the profits on the venture showed a low percentage or were slow in development.

Apart from the question of Bell's managerial sanction, however, I had perforce to develop my plans with extreme caution. This idea was a new departure in journalism. I could not afford that any suspicion of my intentions should go abroad. War Correspondence in those days was a matter of deep rivalry and searching competition between the big London Dailies. The merest suggestion, however oblique, might "give away" the idea that I was so jealously fostering to a rival journal. This would be fatal, for I was wise enough in my craft to know that

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this proposed application of wireless telegraphy might possibly be used upon this occasion by one journal, and upon this one occasion only, since, if it were heralded with success, it would, upon future campaigns, be strangled by the military authorities in control. I therefore took no one, not even my immediate colleagues on *The Times*, into my confidence, and settled down in the few days left to me to work out a form of procedure, into which I could introduce my project if the fates and my employers were complaisant.

Fortunately my position on *The Times* was such that I was able to decide my own course of activity. Mr. Moberly Bell, the tempestuous Manager, Mr. Buckle, the generous-minded and cultured Editor, and in his turn, in future days, Mr. Geoffrey Dawson as Editor, always allowed me to plan my own procedure, in all the countless missions upon which they sent me. This was part of their greatness in the directing of journalistic effort. As Bell said to me once: "We have expended much more money than you are worth in buying experience for you. We now want to profit by that experience!"

Nevertheless, however complete predesigned plans may be, they, in this business, as in all others, must be favoured by fortune, if they are to be really successful. Fortune generally favoured me in my journalistic career, and rarely, if ever, more significantly than it did on this particular occasion.

While I was wrestling with maps of the Far East, charts and naval and military data, I

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learned that Dr. Lea de Forest was in England. I also learned that he was returning to New York on the *Majestic*. I therefore took my passage tentatively by this liner.

It was during these days of uncertainty that Mr. David Fraser came into the picture. Moberly Bell had discussed certain details with me, especially as to the advisability of marking down a man, or men, to assist me if the war actually came about.

I was at Printing House Square when to me came Colonel Lumsden, late of Lumsden's Horse, and he brought with him David Fraser. I had known Colonel Lumsden in the Boer War as the very gallant and generous commander of his Volunteer Regiment drawn from Indian planters. He brought Fraser to me in the hope that he could find employment on *The Times* if the war came. Fraser was a dour-looking Scotsman, who had begun life as a bank clerk. Enterprise had taken him to India in a banking capacity. There his mind had broadened in the atmosphere of extensive field sports that is open to bank clerks, as well as to other Europeans. He had enlisted in Lumsden's Horse for the Boer War, and had returned to this country entirely disinclined to return to an office stool. He had a turn for expressing himself on paper, and seemed to me just the type of man I should like to have with me.[1]

[1] How right I was has been proved, by Mr. Fraser's subsequent career. At the time of writing I believe him to be *The Times* own Correspondent at Pekin. He succeeded Dr. Morrison in that capacity.

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As Moberly Bell was still in an uncertain mood, he would not incur any outlay for the moment: but he agreed that if Fraser could find his way out to Japan, he should be employed as soon as I found his employment necessary. Unfortunately Fraser was at the end of his tether, and as more ominous news came in that night, I induced the Manager to say that he would defray Fraser's passage to the Far East if he would travel at the reduced rates that would be allowed if he journeyed as my servant.

I was getting anxious on Monday, December 21st, 1903, lest I should have to disclose prematurely my wireless aspirations to Moberly Bell in order to travel in the *Majestic* with De Forest. This distressed me, as I did not yet think the moment opportune. However, fortune again favoured me. Something had evidently brought the Manager to a decision, as just as I was sitting down to dinner on December 21st I received a curt note from Moberly Bell telling me that I must start for Japan as soon as I could.

I left, with Fraser as my valet, in the *Majestic* from Liverpool, on December 23rd, having been told by Moberly Bell, still in his financial heart yearning for peace, that we must be prepared to be recalled, if matters eased themselves out East, on arrival in New York or San Francisco.

I did not see much of my valet after we left Queenstown. The *Majestic* hit a heavy south-west gale, and Fraser was not the best of sailors. Moreover, he was of course travelling in the least comfortable portion of the ship. The

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"valet" business was not without its humorous side. The passenger list showed "Captain L. James and valet." The American reporters, both on arrival at New York and during our journey across their vast continent, could not quite digest a War Correspondent, even of the London *Times*, who travelled with a valet, and the matter was referred to in countless journals with appropriate gibes and witticisms.

It was on Christmas Day that I came into touch with Dr. de Forest, and tentatively broached the subject that I had been nursing so long. As I had anticipated, he rose to my bait with alacrity, and he was soon discussing the subject with enthusiasm. I impressed upon him that the element of the whole thing was secrecy, and that disclosure of any project that we agreed upon would immediately arouse competition, not only of competing journals, but of such wireless systems as were in the field. He readily understood this reasoning, and the whole affair was kept a good secret until the actual operators and the plant had left Seattle on the journey to Japan. Then it leaked out. But by then we had established a sufficiently long lead to outdistance immediate pursuit.

Having digested the possibilities as outlined by De Forest, I spent the remainder of the voyage in working out the probabilities, and as the weather abated as we neared New York I took Fraser into my confidence. It can be imagined with what interest we awaited news from the Far East as the *Majestic* on the last day of the year berthed in New York.

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News was forthcoming at once, as a cable from *The Times* was put into my hand at once. It read: "News unchanged proceed Bell." In anticipation of these instructions I had prepared the following message in cypher which I immediately dispatched before Fraser and myself caught the express which connected with the Overland Limited at Chicago.

"Propose adopt De Forest wireless system. De Forest will give plant two stations 250 pounds stop freight Japan operators expenses four months should not exceed 750 more stop propose one station Wei-hai-wei other hired boat or Korean Coast stop doubtless you could arrange American papers join stop if sanctioned cable Responder [1] New York yes and me Siberia San Francisco."

It can be understood that on my arrival at San Francisco I awaited the reply from Moberly Bell concerning the De Forest suggestion with more than normal interest. The answer came with the two words: "Arranged Forest."

These two words in cypher spoke volumes to me. In the first place Moberly Bell was now convinced that war was inevitable. My scheme for wireless had the sanction of *The Times*. It will be seen that in my original suggestion from New York I had slurred over the question of a floating remitting station. "Hired boat" was the phraseology I had employed to express

[1] De Forest's cable address.

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my meaning, and I had added the alternative of a fixed remitting station on the Korean coast, knowing full well that the latter would never answer my purpose.

We only had forty-eight hours in San Francisco before our boat, the *Siberia*, sailed for our destination. It was a busy period for me. Firm arrangements had to be made with De Forest for the immediate dispatch of his installation and operators.

The evening before we sailed from San Francisco I exploded my final bomb in Moberly Bell's office. I felt that he was now sufficiently compromised in the scheme, so I cabled him to the following effect:

"To *Times* London. Your consent received and acted upon. Vessel essential cable result Honolulu James." [1]

[1] The following is the first letter I received from Moberly Bell concerning this new adventure in journalism. As a document it is typical of the man, and, in view of Lord Northcliffe's subsequent connection with *The Times*, the reference to the *Daily Mail* is not without interest.

"*The Times*, Printing House Square, E.C.
"*January 15th*, 1904.

"MY DEAR JAMES,—I don't know what the chances are of your getting this letter, nor is it likely to be of much use, everything being probably in the way of self-settlement by the time you get it. But—briefly—I swallowed your De Forest pig in a poke on the assumption that it was risking £1,000. Having told you that I was booked to this extent, you promptly replied that a steamer was 'Essential.' Your diplomacy was excellent, for if I had realized that I should have jibbed. For a ship called the *Puri* at Bombay, twin screws and all other desirable adjuncts, I am asked 13,000 rupees per month (about £820), plus cost of wages, coal, etc.

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It is not my intention to place on record here the full detail of my efforts to place my mechanism in working order. It would fill a volume of itself. As a result of Bell's sanction to my scheme and our joint efforts by the end of February, I had the following organization completed.

I have responded by a sporting offer of £600, plus wages and war insurance only. I may go up to £750, but I am not in a hurry because I hope Brinkley may offer me something on the spot at a more reasonable rate.

"No doubt when you arrived at Honolulu you were disappointed at not receiving a message—well, De Forest's wireless machine doesn't carry as far, and besides, I hadn't it in the office. . . . Colquhoun left Brisbane on 9th. . . . He is to me also a dark horse, also a D.S.O. Ginare is going thro' Siberia and wires that they are more apathetic and more peaceful the further East he goes. When you arrive at Yokohama you will no doubt telegraph me what you are doing, what can be done, and what you want me to do. . . . This, more than most wars, is a game of blind-man's buff. I rely on you to beat Bennett Burleigh and the rest of them. If you can get into touch with Morrison by wire, do so.

"Yours,

"C. F. Moberly Bell.

"P.S.—We can't have anything to do with the *Daily Mail* in any case, but there was apparently no truth whatever in the rumour you telegraphed about them and Lipton. Had there been, I could not have joined with them, nor touched them with a pole. I telephoned at once to Lipton not to ask anything about the *D.M.*, but to ask whether he would let me have the *Erin* or any similar boat. His reply showed that there had been no previous negotiations, for he asked, 'What for?' and then was rather struck by the idea, but said he could do better for us than that and has been wiring all over the place. Through him I got the offer of the *Puri*. I asked him later whether anyone else had been chartering, and he said only the Associated Press of U.S.A."

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While I myself for the time being remained at Tokio to be in touch with the Japanese naval and military authorities, I had David Fraser established at Wei-hai-wei, the British concession port on the Yellow Sea, in charge of our receiving station and maritime base. I had chartered in Hong-Kong and had had delivered at Wei-hai-wei the 1200-ton steamer *Haimun*, fitted with De Forest's system of wireless, as a mobile remitting station. Fraser had had erected for me at Wei-hai-wei, after considerable difficulty, my fixed wireless station. Two American operators, Athern and Brown, were in charge of the wireless. In Tokio to complete my staff was Captain Colquhoun, D.S.O., of the Australian Navy, who had been selected by Bell to act as Naval Correspondent, and who was awaiting permission to join the Japanese Battle Fleet.

Until the enterprise of the wireless equipped steamer became a *fait accompli*, our secret was well kept. An army of War Correspondents was congregated at Tokio, chafing under the inactivity which the Japanese with complacent *politesse* forced upon them. They represented all nationalities. Naturally those of America and of my own country predominated. These one and all used their big or little endeavour, as the case might be, to torpedo my enterprise. It was taken from personal remonstrance and fevered attempts at imitation into the tortuous paths of diplomacy.

The American Minister protested to the Japanese Foreign Office that undue favouritism was being shown to the London *Times*. The Japanese

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Foreign Office replied that they had no control over *The Times* upon the high seas, and failed to see how they could shoulder any responsibility for or against any private enterprise on the part of that journal until it clashed with their naval and military security.

Sir Claud Macdonald, the British Minister in Tokio, kindly and friendly to me throughout, suggested that I was wasting my time and my employers' money. Captain Brinkley, my colleague, permanently resident in Japan, apprehensive that I might perpetuate some indiscretion that would injure the interests of his adopted nationality, was at heart opposed to the scheme, though there was sufficient of the journalist in him to admire the spirit of the enterprise.

Jealous colleagues whispered into my ear strange stories that they had arrived at from secret Japanese sources that my ship was to be "sunk" by accident, if it witnessed any naval engagement that the Japanese did not wish to have reported. The British Admiral, Commander-in-Chief in China, ponderously intimated that my action was a flagrant breach of British neutrality, and in this spirit warned his branch of the Service against me.

All of which I could view with equanimity, since I had not gone into this expensive adventure upon any ground that I could consider insecure as far as the Japanese were concerned. A quarter of a century has passed since the Russo-Japanese War, and the time has now arrived when I can divulge a great secret that

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I have kept for these twenty odd years. As soon as I arrived at Tokio, I secured an interview with Admiral Saito, the sub-Chief of the Naval Ministry. I put before him the proposal that he should place upon my vessel a suitable officer from the Japanese Navy, who, while pretending to be my Japanese interpreter, would also be my Censor and also an Intelligence Officer for Admiral Togo's Grand Fleet. In simple wording I offered to bring the *Haimun* (she could do 16 knots under forced draught) unreservedly into the scheme of Japanese Naval Intelligence for value received in the opportunities that would then come to me to supply early and exclusive news to *The Times*.

To this proposal, after careful deliberation and many interviews, the Japanese naval authorities agreed. This Agreement, which bore the signature of the Minister of State for the Navy, was put into the following terms:

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS, TOKIO,

February 21*st*, 1904.

SIR,—

I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 12th instant, addressed to H.E. the Minister of the Navy with reference to the Wireless Telegraphic communications to be made by S.S. *Haimun*.

It gives me much pleasure to be able to inform you that the Imperial Government, in consideration of the excellent terms and understanding which exist between the two nations,

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sees no objection and is willing to comply as a special case to your request, should you agree with the contents of the accompanying instructions.

I take this opportunity to thank you for your cordial offer to place, if required, your telegraphic apparatus and expert operator at the service of the Imperial Forces and at the same time I hope you will consider that we shall be happy to give you any such assistance as you may require and which is possible for us under the present circumstances.

I remain,
Yours respectfully,
VICE-ADMIRAL G. IJUIN,
Imp. Jap. Navy.

Captain L. James.
The Special Correspondent of
The Times.

The instructions referred to dealt with the matter of the Japanese naval officer who was to accompany me, and the question of "codes" and wireless commmunication with Japanese stations.

When the Minister of Marine handed me this document, he said in the kindliest manner that they admired my enterprise, and were most sensible of my loyalty to the Japanese cause, and that they had decided to accept my offer of co-operation in their naval operations. That to this end they had selected a Commander Tonami, who was a wireless specialist in the

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Japanese Navy, to accompany me, in the capacity both of Censor and connecting link with the Japanese Fleet when occasion offered.

With which the kindly Minister of Marine wished me luck and withdrew, while Admiral Saito asked me to call in again on the following day and see him when he would have instructions ready for me. Again as he bid me farewell he said: "You must not divulge this arrangement to anyone. Do not let our military authorities know and"—here was an injunction that astonished me—" in no case must you for the present let Captain Brinkley of *The Times* know what we have arranged!"

I left the Admiralty walking on air, as the saying goes. It did not reck me that I was about to become a licensed spy for the Japanese Navy. All that I cared was that, having brought my preparations to completion, I had achieved, in the face of even ambassadorial pressure against me, the key that would make my preparations operative, and justify the confidence that *The Times* had placed in me, and the large expenditure they were incurring, and would incur, as the outcome of that confidence.

On the following morning I had my interview with Admiral Saito, at which we came to the following arrangements. I was to recall the *Haimun* to Nagasaki, ostensibly to coal. She was not to sail from that port before the morning of March 8th. On the previous evening Commander Tonami would go on board in the capacity of my interpreter. He would of course be in civilian rig. I was to take Commander Coloqu-

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houn with me, as the Admiral had arranged, as a very special concession, that he should visit Admiral Togo, at the Japanese advanced naval base. It would then be Coloquhoun's business to get permission from the Admiral-issimo to go to sea with the Fleet. I was to deliver Coloquhoun at Chemulpo, where one of the torpedo boats used as dispatch boats would take him to the Fleet.

The Admiral thought that it would be best that I had no interview with Tonami in Tokio. There were too many watchful eyes about, but that he had better make his way down to Nagasaki and as a civilian slip unobserved on to the boat. It was then agreed that I should let it be known that I was abandoning the enterprise, and to give colour to this impression, apply for attachment to the First Japanese Army in the Field. The Admiral then in the kindest and most expansive manner wished me "Good luck."

I ordered the *Haimun* by cable to come to Nagasaki to coal. Accompanied by Commander Coloquhoun, I caught a Japanese packet that sailed from Yokohama on March 3rd and was due to reach Nagasaki on March 8th. It was a charming voyage.

For the first time since I had arrived in the Far East, I had time to observe the beauties of this strange fascinating land. We spent altogether four days on our voyage through the Inland Sea. It was a continual feast to all that was æsthetic in me. It was hard to believe that the artistic denizen of these wonderful

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islets, lagoons, coves and reaches that we passed in such amazing plethora of enticing landscape, should be engaged in anything as sordid and inartistic as modern war.

At daylight on March 8th we made Nagasaki, and were there piloted into what is, perhaps, the most beautiful landlocked harbour in the world. As we steamed up to the anchorage proper it became more beautiful to me, for there buoyed, a cable's length from us, lay the shapely *Haimun*, looking very trim and seaworthy by comparison with the colliers, tramps and hulks that lay around us. Blue Peter was fluttering at her mast-head, and I could descry Fraser on her upper deck, betraying his recent association with the British Navy at Wei-hai-wei by the white blanket overcoat he sported.

We were not long in coming aboard "our ship." I found that Commander Tonami was already on board and that all arrangements were complete.

The *Haimun* was all that had been claimed for her. She had five European officers besides the Captain. A crew of about forty Chinamen and four Malay quartermasters. The Master, Captain Passmore, was a swarthy shell-back of about fifty. He was a good if cautious seaman; his chief weakness was his affection for some particular design of barometer, invented, I was told, by a scientist in some monkish observatory that overlooked the China Seas. This complex instrument was a typhoon detector, and Captain Passmore's spirits rose and fell in sympathy with the mercury. If the barometer suggested

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a typhonic depression, say 500 miles south of Swatow, Captain Passmore in the Yellow Sea refused his prawn-cutlets for breakfast. He had only one vanity that I could trace, and that was his claim during boyhood to have played in the same garden with Lily Langtry.

Mr. Mutton, the Chief Officer, was moulded in very different clay. If I were ever again in a tight place, I would like to have Mutton always at my side. He hailed, I think, from Birkenhead, and came of seafaring forbears. He was a worthy scion of the class to which the British Empire owes so much. The other officers do not call for individual comment. They were brave and good fellows of the sea, and they served *The Times* faithfully and well.

It was a joy to be associated with Commander Tonami. He was, of course, a little shy and diffident at first; but as soon as the ice was thawed, I had every reason to be thankful at the selection Admiral Saito had made. Before all else Tonami was an earnest Japanese naval officer. With him duty stood first. Apart from duty he was a delightful companion, brimming over with a sense of humour. A man of forty on the steamer's bridge, he was a boy in the early twenties when the peaked hat was doffed. I learned to admire and respect the Japanese through my good friend Tonami far more steadfastly than through any other agency. It took a little time to build up a confidence between us; but once it was established, it became an asset, I know, to *The Times*, and I trust, also, that it proved of value to our Allies.

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We sailed from Nagasaki at 2 p.m. with £600 worth of freight beneath our hatches, and something that to me was far more valuable. In my inner pocket I carried my authority from the Japanese Admiralty!

Our destination was Chemulpo.

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CHAPTER XVIII

SATISFACTORY DELIVERIES

ON March 9th the *Haimun* was ploughing her way against a head sea, steering a course to Chemulpo. Although she had already trifled with journalism during her two trips between her base at Wei-hai-wei and the port which was her present destination, yet the period of her full utility was only now about to be reached. Unfortunately the first few weeks of her complete efficiency coincided with a lull in the Japanese naval operations. It may, therefore, help the narrative to outline briefly the naval and military situation in the Yellow Sea, as it was between March 8th and the end of that month.

March was, more or less, marked by a respite in the sea operations. The Russians were engaged in an attempt to repair their disasters of the opening days of the war, while the Japanese were pressing on their invasion of Korea, which was a complement to the Naval strategy of the campaign. Admiral Togo's fleet, however, was not absolutely idle: at stated intervals units of it appeared off Port Arthur and attempted to maintain the state of demoralization within that naval harbour by long-range bombardment. Also intermittent torpedo raids and further channel-blocking enterprises took place.

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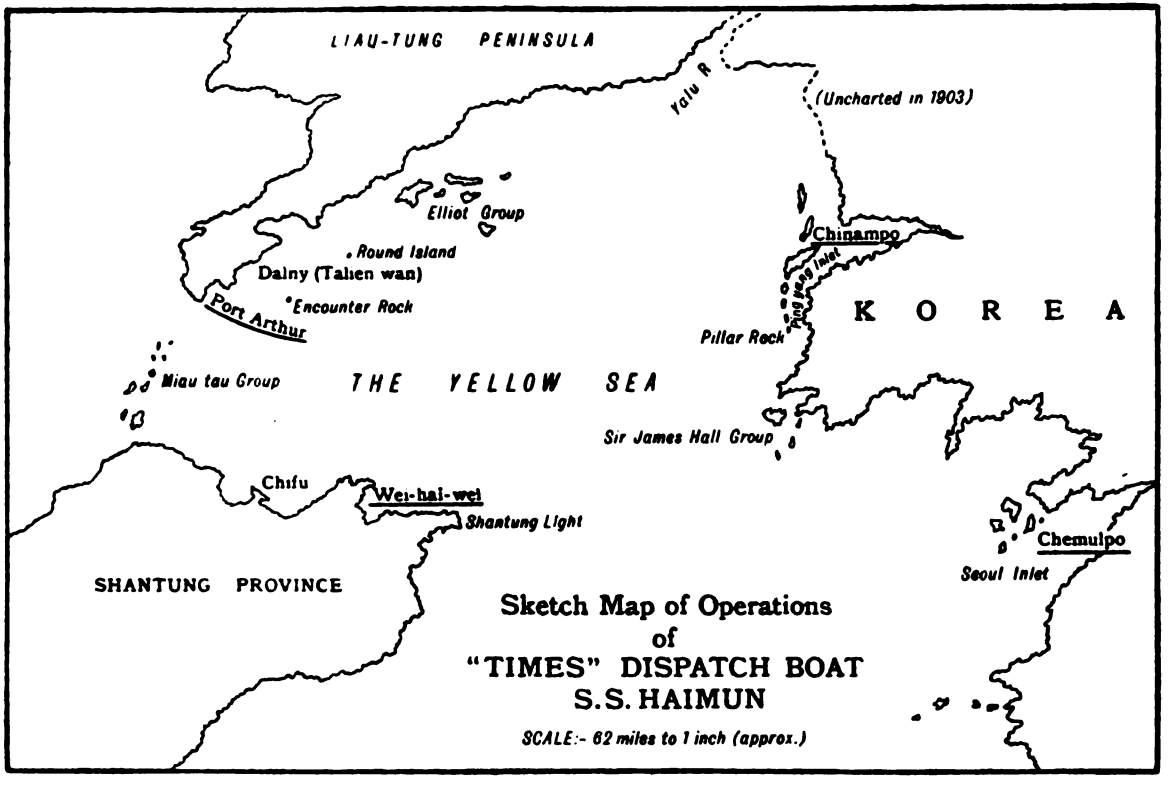
Admiral Makaroff, the hope of the Russian Navy, had arrived at the fortress. His presence had an inspiriting effect upon the Russian naval forces: repairs to the injured capital ships were pressed forward; the entrance channel to Port Arthur was surveyed and such obstacles as the Japanese had made effective were removed by depth charges. By March 20th a passage was found to be practicable.

Five days before it was possible for the Russian Fleet again to put to sea, General Kuroki had completed the landing of the First Japanese Army at Chinampo. The moment that the ice had broken up in the Ping-Yang Inlet the Japanese troops had begun to disembark. In this matter the Japanese had been in front of their schedule. In the best of circumstances they had not hoped to have had a sufficient command of the Yellow Sea as early in the campaign as this.

We made the Chemulpo entrance early on the morning of the 10th, and threading our way amid the islands and shoals, anchored at midday close against the wrecks of the unlucky Russian warships *Variag* and *Korietz*, which had been sunk by Admiral Uriu exactly a month previously. As there was a Japanese guard ship and one or two torpedo boats in the anchorage, the first thing was to ferry Colquhoun and his Admiralty letter with Tonami across to the man-of-war. As we were full of cargo, there could be no hope of getting away until the second day.

Chemulpo, though a wonderful anchorage, was not in those days an up-to-date port. Merchantmen had to lie out several miles from the shore,

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and be laded from, or unladed into, lighters operated by the world's most listless stevedores. I decided, therefore, to go to Seoul, taking Fraser with me. Seoul is the capital of the Hermit Kingdom, the seat of a nerveless Emperor whom the little Japanese invaders had recently confirmed in impotence by squeezing a treaty out of him to consolidate their tutelage. In the method of diplomatic absorption of territory the Japanese were apt imitators of Western enlightenment.

My principal memory of Seoul is a very muddy, ramshackle town, full of grave-looking men in white surplices and ridiculous-looking high hats to match. In reality we only spent a matter of minutes there, as we caught the early train back to Chemulpo. Here my troubles were with me again. Many people were conspiring to profit upon my inexperience as a supercargo. The ship's officers " were trying it on," as the saying goes. Captain Passmore, instead of helping me, was spellbound in front of his barometer. A typhoon depression was disturbing Ceylon. As his vessel was in port that sufficed for his immediate interests.

The Agents, who thought that they could handle the cargo consigned to them at their leisure, told me that the boat could not sail for three days more. I never was a weak subject, and I soon had the officer who was responsible for the ship's cargo to heel. The threat of a passage back to the owners at Hong-Kong was sufficient physic for him.

The Agents' representative was more persistent in his bluff. He had his difficulties, I have no doubt, since the Japanese occupation had upset the smooth commercial working of the port. He

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threatened to get the Consul to withhold the ship's papers and take action for damages for "over carrying." My reply was an ultimatum. I said that my ship was primarily *The Times* dispatch boat, and that this fact overrode all his objections. If he cared to use us as a passenger and cargo boat, it must be only at my time and convenience. I told him that, whatever happened, I was due to sail at daybreak on the following morning, and sail the ship would. He tried to coerce the Captain, who came into line with me at once when I showed him the instructions as regard to discipline supplied me by his owners.

It was a curious position that I was in. Once the Captain had said "Let go" in harbour, and the anchor had hurtled to its holding, I became the dictator. The moment the anchor was up, I sank to the insignificance of a passenger, and as far as obedience to any orders went, the Captain was his own master, until he anchored his ship in port again. It was, however, rather an advantage that we had this initial trial of strength at the first port. It cleared all obstacles off the decks, and we never had any serious differences afterwards.

In conjunction with Tonami, and with his consent, it was agreed that we should take the *Haimun* to Wei-hai-wei, returning to Chemulpo via Chinampo. Tonami saw no harm in this, provided I did not visit Togo's rendezvous *en route*, and I advised the Japanese Admiralty in Tokio by cable in cypher of the ship's movements. I have set all this out in some detail, since the Japanese Military Department as opposed to

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Naval Authority made trouble about this visit to Chinampo, although I had given my naval associates all the information, and ample time to utilize it, if they had so desired. The *Haimun* left Chemulpo on March 11th and did not appear at Chinampo until March 15th. On five out of these six days I could have been communicated with.

At daylight on March 12th we made the Shantung Promontory and I had my first view of China, in connection with which continent I was now destined to spend a sequence of hectic months. We did not run into Wei-hai-wei until 1 p.m., but an hour before we passed into the harbour we could see that at least 100 feet of our wireless mast was standing on Leu Kung, also that a couple of spacious huts had grown up beside the mast. This was cheering evidence that Athern and Brown, the two American wireless operators, knew what they wanted and had kept the contractor that Fraser had appointed busy.

There is much that is attractive in Wei-hai-wei; especially is this so in summer. The island of Leu Kung makes the great spacious bay into a lagoon. On the sheltered side of the island are the naval establishments and the general business portion of the settlement. It had at one time been intended to fortify Wei-hai-wei. In fact, several of the batteries, except for their armaments, had been completed.

This meant that there were splendid roads zigzagging up the island bluff, to the very top where we had our pole. The island was garnished with a very pleasant little hotel, and for those who could claim its hospitality, there was the Service

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Club, which in its pristine days had been the Chinese Taotoi's mansion, and was the same official palace where the discomforted Chinese Admiral Ting had committed suicide after surrender to Japan, in the finale of the Sino-Japanese War.

The following morning was a clear, beautiful spring morning. Fraser and I walked up to the wireless station early. Here we went thoroughly into all the pros and cons, and things certainly did not, upon analysis, look half so black as they had on the previous evening. Athern assured me that, if he and Brown could have four hours on the *Haimun*, to finish the fitting of the wireless cabin, even in our present state, our communications should be good for 100 miles. This was most satisfactory, as it would permit me to sail that evening for Chinampo.

Armed with this encouraging information, I came to my decisions as we strode down the hill. I would arrange that Fraser took my place with the Japanese land forces, as soon as Correspondents were permitted to accompany that force. I could slip over with the *Haimun*, and dump him and his *penates* at Chinampo, just whenever the authorities gave the word.

Athern and Brown had done good work that day and the *Haimun* was ready to sail at 6 p.m. The ship sailed with Captain Vincent,[1] Fraser, Brown the operator, and myself. That night, when we were 70 miles distant from Wei-hai-wei, we sent our daily news budget by wireless. It was not a long message, as news was scanty. As I waited in the cosy little saloon, and heard the

[1] British Military Attaché.

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3-inch spark cracking out its message, I could picture in mind Athern upon his aerie at Wei-hai-wei sitting in the hut, pencil in hand, receiving-cap over his ears. Was he getting it? This was the first war cable in the history of all time, sent by wireless from an area convulsed by naval war. The cracking sounds stopped. The message had gone. Had it been received? There was a minute or two of silent tension, and then Brown's deep voice bellowed forth: "That's 'Pop' Athern—message O.K."

It was a great moment. It was exactly seventy-four days since we had left London. It was thirty days since Togo had launched his first offensive against Port Arthur. Here we were at the opposite end of the world equipped in every detail, in pursuance of an absolutely novel idea and one most comprehensive in its development, within a month of the opening hostilities. When it is remembered that this idea had first to germinate, and then to be carefully nursed into the growth against countless adverse circumstances, before it could come to fruition, I think that it will be agreed that that message we heard "O.K.-ed' from the middle of the Yellow Sea, on the night of March 14th, 1904, may be accredited to *The Times* as an achievement in the field of journalism. I know that I, the agent responsible for all that had been developed, turned into my narrow bunk that night, tingling with satisfaction.

We made Pillar Rock at daybreak the following morning and steered our way into the entrance of the Ping-Yang Inlet. A Japanese transport packed with troops was just in front of us, and

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CHINAMPO : KOREA.

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Captain Passmore put the *Haimun* in behind her. The Ping-Yang Inlet, which is the estuary of the river of that name, leads up between volcanic islets and an uninviting rock-bound coast to the so-called port of Chinampo. We were about half-way on our journey when a Japanese cruiser, guarding the fair way, signalled us to stop.

We had just begun to meet the drift-ice that had been set free by the opening of this ice-bound port not many hours previously. The cruiser put a boat aboard us, and it was a novel sensation to have an armed party aboard. The boarding officer was somewhat perplexed, so I volunteered to go and see his Captain. This I did, and I was received by a very civil little Japanese Captain, who said that his orders were to permit no unauthorized boats to proceed northwards. I claimed that I did not belong to this category, and that I should have had Tonami on board, if it had not been for the circumstance of his visiting the Japanese Grand Fleet at his base behind the Sir James Hall Group. This seemed to satisfy the Captain. He said I might proceed, but I must report, on arrival at Chinampo, to Admiral Hosoya on the flagship *Fuso*.

With this permission we picked our way up the channel for the remaining miles and made the Chinampo anchorage about 3 p.m. We had hit upon the main landing of Kuroki's Army. The anchorage was thick with transports, and thousands of troops were being put on shore from them with great dispatch and efficiency.

Time was short, and we had to land Vincent, who was due to make his own way up to Ping-

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Yang, as an authorized attaché with Kuroki and pick up such information as might be available on shore.

Chinampo is the usual type of dirty little town that in those days was found along the Korean coast. We discovered that we were assisting at the landing of the Guards' Division, the same little canary-hatted fellows we had seen billeted throughout the Oyama suburb at Tokio. It was a most interesting evening for me, and I spent a most profitable hour in examining the transport and equipment of the Japanese Field Army.

We took Vincent to a disreputable looking tea-house where we found a wild-eyed European. This was none other than Mr. F. A. McKenzie, the War Correspondent of the *Daily Mail*. He fell upon my neck. He was, in those days, a man of a somewhat excitable temperament. His eyes blazed as he told me of his adventures. He said that if he could only get to China and a Censor-free cable, he had *the* "Story of the War" to tell. He had broken all restrictions, and, as far as I remember, said he had been to Ping-Yang and beyond and had seen the first clash between the Japanese advanced guard and the Russian Cossacks. He had been arrested by the Japanese military police, and thrust back to Chinampo, where he was under police orders to leave for Japan by the first available means. Would I take him?

I said that I would only be too pleased to take him as far as Chemulpo, from whence he could work his way via Fusan to Japan.

"Would I not take him to China?"

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"That," I replied, "was impossible. In the first place! I was not going to China—at least, not yet. Secondly, I had promised the Japanese to take no Correspondent to China."

Then McKenzie suggested that I was my own master, and that I could go to China if I wanted, and that it would possibly be a great help to me in the future if I could aid him to disemburden himself of his "great story."

I told McKenzie that we should be sailing early the following morning, and that I would have the motor-launch at the jetty for him at six o'clock sharp. Having said our farewells to Vincent, Fraser and I returned on board. The current of the Ping-Yang was running very strongly, and with our boat of small power we had some difficulty in returning on board. Just as we made the gangway and jumped clear, the launch broke away, and the last we saw of it in the gathering darkness it was slipping down on the current seawards, and the motor-man could not get the engine to spark. This was annoying, because if he failed to get his engine working, goodness knows what his fate and the fate of the boat would be in that racing current. We never saw the boat again that night.

As soon as we had dined, I settled down to prepare a long dispatch for *The Times*, which I should send by wireless to Wei-hai-wei, while we were plugging our way down to Chemulpo on the morrow. I, too, had what I considered a good story, though, unlike McKenzie, I could not claim that it was the greatest story of the war. It was bitterly cold at anchor that night, and I could not

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but feel sorry for the hosts of little soldiers who were bivouacking on the road to Ping-Yang.

Just before six on the following morning we descried our launch spitting its way towards us. It had McKenzie on board. Apparently, after its break-away, the launch had drifted for a mile or two before the man could get the motor working; then, as he could not find the *Haimun* in the dark, he had made his way to shore, where McKenzie had picked him up in the morning. We had the anchor up almost at once, and with a respectful dip of our ensign to the *Fuso*, we steamed down the passage. We passed several more Japanese transports, and at 11.30 made the open sea. It was almost agonizing to poor McKenzie to hear the crack of our "spark" as Brown began to send my message as soon as we were clear of Pillar Rock.

But I had my troubles as well, as although Brown listened in for all he was worth, he could not catch any "O.K." from the shore station. This was serious, so I went and had a consultation with the Captain. We worked it out that if we altered course to Wei-hai-wei we could make the anchorage about ten o'clock that night. I decided that the course should be altered, but it was incumbent upon us not to let McKenzie know we were touching at a neutral port. He was a man of desperate resolve, and would have been quite capable, if he found himself at Wei-hai-wei, of jumping overboard and swimming ashore to get his "great story" uncensored into a neutral cable office.

We determined, therefore, to have a festive

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dinner on board that night, and to so ply McKenzie with our hospitality that he would be non-observant of what the ship was doing.

McKenzie, however, was no "griffin"; and during the afternoon, as I was pacing the upper deck with him, he stopped at the after compass, and said, "The ship has changed her course. We were going south a little time ago, and now we are going nearly west!"

I replied, as confidently as I could, that we had to steer this course for a bit to avoid certain shoal water, but I could have kicked myself for having forgotten that compass. Anyway, when McKenzie, a little later, went below for tea, I got hold of Mutton, the Chief Officer, and explained the difficulty to him. He put it right in no time, with a piece of cork; and when after tea McKenzie again "conned" the ship, the after compass showed her to be heading due south. Fortunately, McKenzie did not observe the setting sun. So we were over that fence all right.

We had a right royal dinner that night, and we plied McKenzie with as much champagne as he would take, and pointed the crevices with cocktails and liqueurs. McKenzie deserved these good things, as he had been living on Japanese dried skate and sodden rice for the past fortnight. The comfort of the *Haimun* was a joy to him. He just came up on deck for a blow for a few minutes before turning in, when there on our beam was the Shantung light. McKenzie stopped in his tracks. "What light is that? I thought that the Japanese had extinguished all navigation lights on the Korean coast!"

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This was a poser. I replied, however, as readily as I could:

"All except that one. They have to keep that one going while they are disembarking their troops on account of their transports. It marks the passage past the Sir James Hall Group of dangerous islands!"

The answer sufficed. The momentary suspicion was allayed. In a few minutes the call of the clean white sheets, missed for so long, took McKenzie below. We gave him an hour to settle down, and then, as we had prearranged, we turned the cabin key on him. All unconscious, the repository of the *Daily Mail's* greatest story in the war was our prisoner, until our brief call at Wei-hai-wei should be an incident of the past.

Brown had, of course, informed Athern that we were coming in. At 10 p.m. we anchored off Wei-hai-wei. I sent Fraser in on the motor-boat with the copy of my dispatch. It was not a pleasant journey for him, as there was a heavy roll, and the launch was not too seaworthy. But Fraser was never wanting in pluck. He made Wei-hai-wei jetty all right, and found Athern waiting there for him. We need not have run our risks with the good McKenzie, as Athern had received all the messages perfectly, and the important one was probably already in type in *The Times* Office; but, owing to some small breakdown in the shore plant, he had not been able to communicate with us.

Fraser was only on shore a few minutes. He, however, had a tempestuous time getting back to us, as we lay at anchor on the swell of the open

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sea. He got back nevertheless, but only by the skin of his teeth, for our inefficient little shallop nearly swamped, and Fraser and the two Chinamen of the crew who went with him had to bale for dear life. By 1.30 a.m. the motor-boat was "swung in," and the anchor up, and we were away. As soon as we felt the screw, while Fraser was being reinforced after his exposure by a strong potion, I slipped down to McKenzie's cabin and unlocked the door. Through the panel I could hear the heavy breathing of a slumber that denotes a dead-beat man.

I do not know if McKenzie ever had any inkling of this deception that circumstances forced us to exercise against him. We never referred to it on the morrow. Possibly, if this meets his eye, it will place our hospitality in a new light before him. But then, as in love, so in war—and especially in War Correspondence—all is fair.

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CHAPTER XIX

CAUGHT

THE Captain was unable to make the Chemulpo entrance early enough for us to get up to the anchorage on March 17th. We had, therefore, to anchor for the night under the shelter of the Bordega Islands. Throughout the present cruise we had been in touch with several units of Japan's battle squadron. We were, however, getting a sufficiency of information, which I had to handle with extreme care; and Tonami admitted I was even more punctilious, in the suppression of news that might be of value to the Russians, than even he himself would have been. I felt that I had in no wise prejudiced the confidence which the Japanese Navy had reposed in me.

The Japanese Admiralty had been wise in their decision regarding us, for it was during the next few weeks that the *Haimun's* usefulness to themselves was to develop.

Everything was now in working order, but I was not altogether happy about the mast. In consultation with Colquhoun, we decided that we would have another go at it. In the meantime, as the existing structure was giving good results, we would leave it until I could spare Colquhoun to take it in hand.

At the present moment there was too much

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"naval liveliness" in the Yellow Sea for me to spare my naval expert. Although little mention has hitherto been made of the ships that we passed in the night—and day also—our cruises were full of interest and information. Information that was placing *The Times* ahead of all its rivals.

Tonami was as keen as any of us that we should see all that it were possible for us to see, and he never lost a chance of getting into touch with a Japanese war-ship or Japanese Consulate, and gathering the straws which indicated the direction of the wind. We had kept Tonami's secret for some time, but it lost much of its opaqueness when we were boarded by a picket-boat upon one of our early cruises, and the boarding officer, recognizing Tonami in spite of his civilian get-up, called the boarding party "to attention." Nevertheless, so I was told, the Japanese Admiralty in Tokio informed all our rivals clamouring for our extinction that we were "unauthorized," and would be bound to pay the penalty for our temerity as soon as one side or the other found it convenient to sink us. There were, therefore, about five-score impatient War Correspondents in Tokio praying daily that we might be reported missing. As Tonami by now had ample time to study both my methods and my work, he felt entire confidence in my discretion, and I know that he reported this to his immediate Chiefs.

On the night of March 25th we were within measurable distance of Port Arthur, where Admiral Togo made his second attempt to close that fairway. It was an exciting experience. On the following day we were able to render to Japan a

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most valuable service. Togo believed that his last effort at blockade had been efficacious. Four merchant vessels filled with cement had been navigated into the mouth of the fairway. That they had failed to close the channel the *Haimun* was able to discover, and report instanter by wireless to the Japanese Fleet, since in the late afternoon we saw a squadron of Russian battleships at sea, 10 miles outside Port Arthur.

It was a great journalistic day as well. In the morning we sent a message descriptive of the night operations and the Japanese Grand Fleet at sea. In the afternoon we had a description of the Russian Grand Fleet at sea, including one of the recently repaired capital ships which was hitherto believed to be unseaworthy. Tonami could scarcely repress his excitement as he exclaimed, "The Emperor will give you a decoration for this day's work!"

We lay out all night, because it seemed to me probable that we might stumble upon a fleet action on the following day. At 2 a.m. Mr. Cramp, the Second Officer, who was keeping watch, sent a message to me to come up to the bridge. Our course was bringing us within sight of the Port Arthur searchlights. It was an eerie business steaming without lights in those dangerous waters. The arcs of the searchlights alone pierced the impenetrable darkness. At any moment we might have been the prey to a stealthy torpedo or a hidden mine-field. We steered near enough to the fortress to make certain that there were no gun flashes and then I told the Captain to set a

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course that would bring us in the vicinity of Encounter Rock.

About daybreak I was called to the bridge again as the darkness melted into day. Captain Passmore was a good navigator. A mile or so on our beam the swell of a calm sea was creaming over the dangerous and solitary excrescence of land known as Encounter Rock. But when it was light enough to see the real horizon, we found ourselves in solitary patrol. But not for long. Out of the west came a wisp of smoke, then presently the wisp became a bank. Out of this bank sped a flush of torpedo-craft and behind them raced a Battle Fleet. In all its glory of strength and power, with its battle-flags streaming majestically in the wind, came Togo's Battle Fleet. A dispatch craft shot out and hailed us. Tonami shouted his information across to it, while the fleet steamed away towards Port Arthur. Togo was trailing his coat-tails to entice Makaroff forth.

We laboured after the Leviathans, hoping that we would see a fleet action. But the fleet action was not to be on this day. After a few hours' demonstration the Japanese Fleet sailed away into the eye of the sinking sun. The *Haimun* raced back to its haven at Wei-hai-wei.

We did not waste much time in port, and on March 28th we were out again, lurking in those positions which we thought would be profitable. On this cruise, however, the spring fogs began to descend upon us. We had some difficulty in getting back to Wei-hai-wei: the coast was so blanketed in opaque vapours. The wireless situa-

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tion was now very interesting. With the De Forest detectors, the operators could pick up all the wireless that was in use in the Yellow Sea. This was all valuable information for Tonami. The Popoff System (Russian) was working between Port Arthur and a station somewhere near us—we presumed Chifu. An Italian ship was also making disturbances. We did not then know whether this Italian was at Shan-hi-kwan or Chemulpo. As Chifu seemed certain, Tonami reported it to Mr. Midzenu, the Japanese Consul at that Treaty Port. Within forty-eight hours Chifu became silent, and I often wondered whose throat had been cut.

Tonami's advice was that we should make a trip to Chinampo, so that he could get into touch with the naval elements there. He would then be able to advise us as to our most profitable hunting grounds. So off we went to Chinampo at 8.30 p.m. on March 29th. We had an adventure in the Ping-Yang Inlet. Poor old Passmore ran us on to a sandbank. I shall never forget the old man's despair. I forgot how many years he claimed to have been a master-mariner, and this was the first time, as such, that he had ever "touched bottom."

Anyway, this time he had us fairly stuck. The Japanese guard-ship found us in this predicament, and hoisted the signal: "You will float off all right as the tide rises!" After which cheering information the skipper became happier. The information was right, and the cruiser stood by us until the water rose sufficiently to float us off.

We reached the anchorage at Chinampo at

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4.30, and a picket-boat from the *Fuso* was alongside in no time. It brought an invitation from Admiral Hosoya to go aboard his flagship. Tonami and I went off at once. The Admiral was a stout, cheery individual. He said we had come in the nick of time, as he had lots of naval information for us. I was most royally entertained. We learnt, however, to our deep regret, that little Commander Hiroshe, whom we had entertained a fortnight before on the *Haimun* at Chemulpo, had been killed in a destroyer action off Talien-wan. Not only did the Admiral give us valuable news about certain naval operations that had already taken place, but he gave us a very good résumé of the situation as it was then known on the land front. Anyway, I had a fine news budget to send off as we made Pillar Rock on the return journey on the following day. As "O.K." was forthcoming from Athern at once, we steered a course for Encounter Rock.

I had a long talk with Tonami that morning as we paced the upper deck. He told me that the naval authorities had been a little uncertain as to the wisdom of reposing so much confidence in me; but that now that we had worked together so long, and he had himself seen how scrupulous I had been to ensure Japan's naval interests in all my messages, they were now completely satisfied that they had in me a valuable ally. This was all very comforting to me. But I had yet to learn that the confidence of the Navy was one thing: the confidence of the Army quite another.

As Tonami had a message for Mr. Midzuno at Chifu, and as our cruise in the vicinity of Encounter

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Rock was not productive of naval excitement, we made a course for the Treaty Port.

The first fortnight in April was the most successful period that we had with the *Haimun*. The wireless installation was working without a hitch, and we were able to be present on several great naval occasions.

The spring sun was just sinking in a bank of haze through which it peered, a murky globule of tarnished rose, when on April 1st the skipper of the *Haimun* changed his course to make the Chifu headland. The fog, which hung heavily to the north-west, had beaten the breeze. There was not a ripple on the oily surface of the Yellow Sea, and the countless fingers radiating from the Chifu light heralded a real thick Pechili night.

There was no worry about pilots in the open roadstead; and once Captain Passmore made the headland, he just tucked the *Haimun* in behind a Butterfield & Swire's packet and followed her stern-light. A great cloud of black smoke, which likewise was beaten by the mist, trailed heavily behind the coaster. The lights of Chifu twinkled ahead as the harbour opened up. The *Haimun* forged past the Chinese naval guard-ship, passed under the stern of an Austrian warship, and came almost to a standstill beside the American cruiser *Vicksburg* and its tender. The Chinese bos'n and winchmen clambered on to the forecastle, where Mr. Mutton joined them. The ship was right under the bluff now, with its countless lights dancing across the harbour swell.

The whir of a windlass told us that the Butterfield & Swire boat had let go her anchor. Captain

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Passmore brought the *Haimun* in between her and a China merchant, and dropped his hook.

Within ten minutes the Chinese Maritime Customs' boat was alongside, and the little white-haired "runner" was satisfied that the *Haimun* was upon legitimate business bent. These formalities being settled, I took a *sampan* and went ashore with Tonami.

I had from time to time had intimation from Moberly Bell that he had given various people, who were proposing to visit the Far East, letters to me in case I might be able to utilize them for *The Times* in some way or another. This I had learned, from the experience of previous campaigns, was a fatherly habit on the part of Bell—a bad habit, I think, as he filled all sorts of impossible people with expectations of employment, which were rarely likely to materialize. It was one of Bell's methods of gambling. It was just the cost of a foreign postage stamp to nothing from his point of view; but a lot of useless trouble to his representative on the spot.

When I had pushed my way through the muddy streets to the Beach Hotel, I lightened upon one of these missioners of Bell's in the person of Major Beddoes. He was actually writing to me when I turned up. I had met Beddoes in a previous sphere of activity. There was really very little I could hold out for him in this campaign. These free-lance adventurers usually are replete with wild-cat schemes. Beddoes did, however, give me some information—which was to the effect that eight days previously the first batch of Military Attachés and accredited Correspondents had left

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Tokio, *en route* for the Front. This meant that I must get busy with the shipment of Fraser to Korea.

I brought Beddoes on board to dine with us; and Tonami brought Mr. Midzuno, the Japanese Consul, and Major Mori of the Japanese Army as well. Major Mori told me that, thanks to us, they had found the Russian wireless that communicated with Port Arthur, and had squelched it. Midzuno informed us that he had heard from a colleague, who had it from the Russian Consul in Chifu, that the Russians were somewhat annoyed at the presence of the *Haimun* in the disputed waters, but that they had decided not to take us seriously; only to treat us as a pretty bird they could catch at any moment if we really did them any damage.

We were back at Wei-hai-wei the next morning as early as another instalment of Pechili fog would allow. A telegram arrived simultaneously with us from Brinkley to say that the Correspondents were due to leave Moji, in Japan, on April 6th, by sea transport, for Chemulpo. This gave me ample time for the "dumping" of Fraser. I had perforce to allow the Chief Engineer forty-eight hours in which to do some necessary overhaul to the machinery of the *Haimun*.

On April 3rd we put to sea punctually at 6 p.m. to make the patrol that would be most likely to bring us into touch with the belligerents. We steered first south-east, and then took a course so as to bring us adjacent to Round Island at daybreak. Round Island is another solitary excrescence in the Yellow Sea, like Encounter

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Rock, and is only a few miles distant from the latter.

We know—at least, Tonami knew—that either of these were naval rendezvous for any operations against Port Arthur. At daybreak we found that we had drawn blank. There was not a smudge of smoke to be seen anywhere on a horizon that was beautifully clear. As it was useless to hang about Round Island, we steered a course at half-speed south-east towards the Sir James Hall Group. Although we could hear the Japanese wireless pretty close, yet we did not see a single ship of any description. Having found a point on the Korean coast, we put the ship about, and still at half-speed calculated a course that would bring us back to Round Island at daybreak on April 6th.

We were still unfortunate, for when we made Round Island at 6.30 it was a beautiful clear day, and there was still nothing in sight. We went full speed to Encounter Rock. Still blank. And so we went about and made Round Island, and then steered south-west, just keeping the loom of Port Arthur's sentinel hills in sight.

The spring weather was now perfect, and as a yachting cruise our patrol of the Yellow Sea left nothing to be desired. We sauntered down to the Hwang Ching Islands, and as it was dead calm, I suggested to Captain Passmore that we should anchor there for the night. We were just 27 miles from Port Arthur; and if the blocking operations that I was anticipating were for this night, we should be near enough to be apprised by the firing. I am afraid Captain Passmore's nerve was getting a little rattled, as he was much opposed

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to this suggestion, especially as Colquhoun and I, envisaging mines, had requested that all the boats should be swung out ready for instant *sauvetage*. The Captain then suggested that we should anchor and show no lights. I objected to this. To show no lights, I said, was asking for trouble. Patrol boats of either belligerent chancing upon a ship anchored within 30 miles of Port Arthur, and showing no lights, would not wait to ask questions, but would treat her as an enemy forthwith. No blockade had yet been declared, and we were upon a recognized trade route. Our lights would be the guarantee of our respectability. I got my way with the old man: but he shook his head gravely, and sought solace in the mercury of his precious typhoon barometer.

Colquhoun and I sat for hours on deck that night, watching the Port Arthur searchlights making catherine wheels in the sky: but no flashes nor booming of heavy ordnance came to cheer our souls.

We had the anchor up at 5 a.m. the next morning, and the Captain laid a course to our old tryst, Encounter Rock. We were not destined to draw blank for the third day in succession. We passed Encounter Rock, but just as we got Round Island abeam, about 9 a.m., we made out a large cruiser against the dark background of Talienwan. We did not alter course, and the cruiser lay a converging one towards us. We soon made her out to be the Russian four-funnelled cruiser *Bayan*, and she was flying an Admiral's flag. It is probable that it was the Russian Commander-in-Chief doing a local reconnaissance on his fastest

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cruiser. We had hoisted our ensign, and the *Bayan* steamed parallel with us for about a mile. As it seemed to me probable that we should be stopped and boarded, I sent the following wireless message to Fraser: "Off Port Arthur, 9 a.m. 6/4/04. To Fraser. Urgent, we are about to be boarded by Russians, unless you hear from us within three hours inform Commissioner, Senior Naval Officer and *Times*, London.—JAMES."

It seemed that my spark decided the Russians in their action. The cruiser whipped round and came for us at great speed. I went up on to the bridge. Captain Passmore stood there stolidly, blanched a little under his swarthy skin, as if he were expecting the last trump and judgment day.

"They are going to board us," was my comment.

"That is your concern, not mine," said the skipper. As he spoke a great lurid yellow flame leaped from the *Bayan's* bow, and a projectile went screaming across our bows.

"Stop her," I said to Passmore.

The skipper rang the telegraph, and the good *Haimun* dropped the bone from her jaws.[1]

I had now furiously to think. There was not much time. As I slipped down the ladder from the bridge, it flashed through my mind that "the pretty little bird" that the Russians had talked about was caught. But my trouble was Tonami. I found him in his cabin.

His first act was one that showed that he had a real and deep confidence in me. He handed over to me his copy of the Japanese Naval Cyphers.

[1] Nautical phrase—the white wash at a ship's cut-water. "Bone in her mouth."

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"Take these and give them back to me if we get away all right. If not, destroy them!"

I took the packet.

"What do you propose, Tonami?" I said.

"It is very difficult. You see, I must not be taken on board that ship. It is the *Bayan*. The Captain will recognize me. We were in Paris together. It is very difficult. I will hide somewhere. Then if I am found, I am a Japanese officer—I shall know what to do."

Although Tonami said no more, yet I knew what he meant. He was not going to be taken alive. Also I knew what it would mean for me and my ship if the Russians found on board a Japanese who had committed *hara-kiri*, and his remains were recognized as those of a Japanese naval officer.

It has been pointed out that we had four Malay quartermasters as part of our crew. Fortune made one of them pass down the alley-way at that moment. I looked at him, and then at Tonami. In physiognomy there was little to choose between them. Inside of two minutes Tonami was a Malay quartermaster and in charge of the ship's wheel on the bridge.

Already the *Bayan* was a cable's length away from us, and as I came up on deck I was looking into the horrid muzzles of the great guns she had trained upon us. A boat was already half-way to us. I told Mutton, the Chief Officer, to lower the gangway, and asked Colquhoun to meet the boarding officer and bring him straight to me on the bridge. I then told the skipper that I would do all the talking that was to be done.

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We were boarded by two lieutenants; I could not help noticing how strained and anxious they looked.

The senior boarding officer demanded the ship's papers, and having glanced cursorily at these, turned to me for interpretation as to whom we were. I explained. He then asked to see our wireless chamber. I took him down forthwith. He asked to see our telegrams. I had a wad of telegrams that had been prepared against such a contingency as this. They naturally contained nothing at which any Russian officer should have taken exception.

The boarding officer just glanced at them. I could see that they were practically meaningless to him, as he said, "I want to see the message you sent half an hour ago." I turned to Brown, who was standing by, and asked for it. He handed up the slip, and I started to translate it into French. The Russian took it from me, saying in French, "I can read English, but not speak it fluently." As he spelled it out, a great idea came to me. Providentially one's wits are sharpened on occasions like this. I put my hand on the Russian's arm in a friendly way as I said, "I am a neutral journalist, and I have no right to tell you this. But it is barely two hours since we saw four Japanese cruisers near Hwang Ching Tai. I would not for worlds have your little attention to me be the cause of your being cut off by them, especially as I see you have an Admiral on board."

I had not mistaken that drawn look on the young sailor's face. He took the bait at once, and made me lead him on deck as fast as I could.

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He called to one of his boarding party, and dictated a rapid semaphore message to his ship. The dope had worked. As soon as the message was understood on the cruiser's bridge, orders were shouted back by megaphone, and we were dropped by the boarding party as if we were a plague ship. Almost without the courtesy of a farewell, officers and men tumbled into their boat, and as the sailors bent their backs to the oars the impatients on the cruiser's bridge continued to exhort them to greater effort through the megaphone.

The fear uppermost in my mind was that they might propose to sink us out of hand. It was with great relief that I watched, as the cruiser began to pick up way, the grisly apertures of the guns traversed away from us.

I sent a message to our skipper to dip our ensign. We could afford to be polite. We had had a narrow shave.

Fraser's state of mind in Wei-hai-wei after he received my rather hectic wireless message dispatched at 9 a.m. can be imagined, and his relief also when, within the three hours stipulated therein, he received a message to say that we were free and steaming back to Wei-hai-wei.

Tonami's relief also was intense, and as we watched the *Bayan* scuttling back to the shadows of Port Arthur he shook me warmly by the hand. "You are very clever," he said. "If your country should ever be engaged in a great war, they should give you a very high command!"

We learned afterwards that we were right in our surmise. The *Bayan* was flying Admiral

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Makaroff's flag, and the Russian Commander-in-Chief's mature reflection upon the incident was to be made known to us in a few days' time.

But for a Correspondent in the throes of a campaign, sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof, and I had plenty to occupy my mind when we dropped anchor at Wei-hai-wei at 5 p.m. Captain Passmore said "Let go" with infinite relief, as for the last few hours his barometer had predicted a typhoon.

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CHAPTER XX

STILL DELIVERING

THE time was now due for me to make up my mind as to the extension of our charter period of the *Haimun*. Moberly Bell had left the decision as to an extension with me. My information from Port Arthur was that the Russian battleships *Retsivan* and *Tsarevitch* were practically seaworthy again. This meant that Admiral Makaroff now had at his disposal a battle fleet slightly superior to that of Japan, and that there was every prospect that a fleet action would take place. That prospective fleet action was my lodestar. The present efficiency of my news service, and Moberly Bell's fears that if we gave up our charter the *Haimun* might be rechartered by one of the rival newspapers of *The Times*, decided me, and I cabled to Dodwell's in Hong-Kong to extend the charter for three months in accordance with the option contained in my charter party. It was a grave responsibility, as it meant a liability of another £6,000, but I felt that the chance of the story of the first great fleet action since Trafalgar justified my decision.

Captain Passmore's barometer had not deceived him. The typhoon it had predicted broke upon Wei-hai-wei on April 7th. It was a rushing

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whirlwind of a tempest, and for three days there was no question of the *Haimun* putting to sea, or of any naval operations in the Yellow Sea.

As I had information from Brinkley that the Correspondents authorized to accompany Kuroki's First Army would be either at Chemulpo or Chinampo, I therefore had Fraser's ponies and gear put on board ; and as the weather moderated somewhat, on the 9th we put to sea. It was a rough passage, but we anchored at Chemulpo on the following morning at 10 a.m., having got Athern clearly by wireless at 150 miles, which in those days established a record.

We found an American and an Italian man-of-war at the anchorage besides the *Fearless*, but were astonished to find no Japanese warship there. This was annoying to Tonami, who had both information to forward to and to get from his authorities.

I found that the Military Attachés and Correspondents had left on the previous day for Chinampo ; but as the little coaster that was their store ship, with ponies and kit, was still at Chemulpo, there was no immediate hurry to deliver Fraser at Ping-Yang. We were all on board ready to up anchor by 10 a.m. on April 11th, when we suddenly descried the Japanese guard-ship *Oshiwa* coming in. We delayed sailing until Tonami could board her and get his indications. He was back again in an hour, and said that we must get to Chinampo as soon as we could, or we should have to over-carry Fraser and his *penates*.

Later he told me in confidence that if the

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weather should be propitious, as it now promised to be, the Japanese would engage in laying a couple of mine-fields outside Port Arthur in the area which we had observed the Russian Fleet had navigated when it left the shelter of its anchorage.

I had found Jack London, the American novelist, who had been a fellow-passenger with us on the *Siberia*, stranded at Chemulpo. He was accredited to Kuroki's Army, but in his haphazard way he had missed the Press boat. I was glad, therefore, to give him a passage to his destination, Chinampo. He entertained us finely during the evening with the story of his adventures in a junk in which he had navigated the southern and western shores of Korea, in the hope of picking up war copy for his paper. His nearest approach to copy seemed to have been a couple of very narrow escapes from a watery grave. He was an adventurous spirit was Jack London.

We made Pillar Rock, at the entrance to the Ping-Yang Inlet, at 5.30 a.m. on the following morning, in perfect weather. The Captain reported that he had passed through certain elements of the Japanese Fleet steaming at slow speed at 3 a.m. Tonami and I knew what this indicated, but it was, of course, unknown to anyone else on board. We had kept in touch with Athern at Wei-hai-wei throughout the entire passage, often at 180 miles. News messages dispatched from sea at 5 p.m. were therefore in *The Times* office and in print by the time that we had Pillar Rock abeam.

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On arrival at Chinampo, Tonami and I went at once on board the *Fuso*. Admiral Hosoya was most affable, and complimented me on the value we had been to Japan in its naval operations. He also told Tonami that we must be ready to sail again at short notice, as he would probably have information for us about midday. I therefore went back to the *Haimun* and instructed the Captain that he must have steam up for any time after noon. Tonami promised to arrange with the port officer to have Fraser's horses and gear put on shore.

I then went on shore to look for Maxwell of the *Standard*, who was carrying my authority as a Correspondent to accompany the land forces, and which authority I was transferring, in agreement with Tonami, to Fraser.

I found Maxwell, who was an old friend of mine—it will be remembered we had shared the same house during the siege of Ladysmith—with a pack of Correspondents, at the same tea house where we had on a former visit deposited Captain Vincent. I cannot say that my friend Maxwell received me with open arms. He was, in fact, extremely annoyed with me, and said that he could not compete with me and my ship, as when he had applied for permission to charter a ship, his application had been received with an unqualified refusal.

On my way back I met Tonami, who was looking for me; he was quite agitated, since from information he had just received from the flagship, it was imperative that we should put to sea at once. He had arranged for a naval

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tug and a lighter to get Fraser's horses ashore. The lighter would be alongside the *Haimun* as soon as we were.

Immediately I got on board, I told the Captain that we would sail in half an hour. He was in the chart room, and bending over his chart, he said it was too late, as the Ping-Yang Inlet was not lighted, he would have to anchor for the night half-way down it. I went off and consulted Tonami. He said that it was imperative that we should make the open sea that night: that there was no need to go down the Inlet, as there was a short cut channel out north of Cho-da Island. I went back to the Captain, who said he would not take his ship out without a pilot, as it would be dark before he got clear of the shoals.

I remained conciliatory, and tried to put the Captain on his best mettle. If the Chief Engineer would raise sufficient steam, we could, with the Ping-Yang swift current with us, make nearly 20 knots, and thus effect the passage while it was still light. That if the stokers were doubled I would see that everyone was rewarded. It was the right way to take old Passmore. He only required bolstering up. Murmuring something about somebody being responsible for the ship, he said he would make the effort just as soon as I said "Go."

My next trouble was with Fraser. Fraser was going about his *Exit* in the most leisurely fashion. And when I told him that, as his horses were now being swung out, he had got to be quit of the ship himself in about five minutes,

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he turned upon me quite testily. My reply was in keeping.

"Fraser," I said, "the moment your horses are out, we 'up anchor.' If I have to leave you still on board, your service on *The Times* finishes!"

I had to be severe. Every second was of value to me, and as I was bound not to divulge the cause of my apparently unreasonable demand for instant dispatch, I lent a much disgruntled Fraser a hand with his kit. We tossed everything in pell-mell; and without waiting for *adieux* hustled him over the side into the lighter after his horses.

Up came the anchor. We were moving before Fraser's lighter had cast off. It was a race with daylight. The engine-room staff entered into the spirit of the thing, and the *Haimun*, once she gathered way, never went at a better speed than she ran down current on the Ping-Yang waters. She fairly vibrated from stem to stern. Colquhoun, Tonami and I were all upon the bridge, to give courage to the Skipper. It was twilight by the time that the last and most dangerous passage showed in front of us. Night was falling. Passmore's nerve was faltering. His hand was itching for the telegraph.

"You can't stop her now!" said Colquhoun. "She has too much way on. Hold your teeth and pray!"

The white waters creamed all around us. It was now or never. Night fell with a snap. We were over. There was nothing but night and deep water in front of us. I turned round to Passmore and gripped his hand.

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In the light from the binnacle I could see great beads of perspiration standing out beneath the peak of his cap. The telegraph rang her down to her economical speed, and the Captain set his course for our old tryst Round Island. As we came down from the bridge we all knew that it had been a near thing for the underwriters and possibly for ourselves as well.

At four o'clock on the following morning, the officer of the watch came to my cabin to tell me that he could see battleships abeam. I went up to the bridge, and there on our starboard beam were the dim silhouettes of six battleships in line ahead. They were steaming without lights, at about the same pace as ourselves.

Daybreak brought us into the centre of a wonderful panorama. We were in the middle of the Japanese Battle Fleet. Six majestic battleships, with the *Mikasa* in the van, were to starboard. About four miles away was the first cruiser squadron in line ahead, with the *Nisshin* and *Kasuga* leading. The destroyer flotillas were on the flank. The entire fleet was steaming at a leisurely pace, steering the same course as ourselves. For two hours we steamed on thus. Then suddenly the *Nisshin* and *Kasuga* were signalled to join the battle squadron. As soon as this manœuvre was completed the fleet increased its pace to full speed and raced away from us in the direction of Port Arthur.

We followed at the best pace we could get out of the *Haimun*, but it was tantalizingly slow

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in comparison with that of the warships. As we followed as fast as we could we had our own minor excitements. Brown received a frenzied message, which we knew was Russian. I could not make head or tail of it, except that it finished with the name of our old friend the *Bayan*. In Brown's opinion, the scratchings that he picked up were not those of the Port Arthur land station. I jumped, therefore, to the conclusion that Makaroff's Fleet was also at sea. In this belief I exhorted the Chief Engineer to do his best with the *Haimun's* engines, no matter what my coal bill might be.

What was happening in front of Port Arthur should now be put into its proper perspective. As Tonami had told me in confidence, on April 12th, a mine-layer, escorted by two destroyer divisions and a weak cruiser squadron, left the base at Hai-ju. These were the warships we had passed in the night on our course from Chemulpo to Pillar Rock. They had timed their course so as to arrive off Port Arthur at about midnight. In the meantime Admiral Togo with his battle squadron, and first cruiser squadron, had steamed so as to be at Round Island at daybreak on the 13th. As has been seen, we had been with his armada when it arrived there.

The set scheme had been as follows: The mine-layer was to sow an area in front of Port Arthur as a mine-field. At daybreak the weak escorting squadron was to sail in towards the fortress, as near as was possible without running undue risks from the shore batteries. It was

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hoped that Makaroff would be tempted to bring his squadron out to deal with this weak Japanese offensive. The latter, on seeing the Russians coming out, were to steer a course which would induce the pursuit to try and cut them off. An attempt which would bring the Russians into the vicinity of the mine-field. If, however, they missed the mine-field, and persisted in their pursuit, Togo with his capital ships would be in a position to bring about an action.

It is just probable that the innovation of wireless telegraphy upset the completion of this very well-designed operation. The Russians came out in pursuit all right, and in their endeavour to cut off the Japanese cruisers, they missed the mine-field. When the Admiral of the Japanese cruisers thought that he had got the Russians sufficiently involved, he communicated the fact to Admiral Togo on the *Mikasa* by wireless. We in the *Haimun* saw the result of this message, and the Japanese Battle Fleet pressed forward at full speed.

But Admiral Makaroff on the *Petropavlosk* caught the message as well. Whether he could decipher it or not, or whether he only "smelt a rat," no one can say: but immediately this message was sent he broke off the pursuit and headed back for Port Arthur.

When after an hour's steaming under forced draft Port Arthur opened up to us on the *Haimun*, we could make out the rival fleets, with the Russians steaming hard for the entrance to their haven. Suddenly the Russian line ahead seemed to break up and flashes of light scintillated from

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the bows of the rearward ships. Colquhoun, who, with a telescope, was to the manner born, shouted, "They are into a mine-field and are firing into the sea to explode the mines!" Then he added, "The leading Russian is heeling over!"

We were ten miles distant. It was, however, dead calm and the visibility was perfect. Presently a great tidal ripple came creeping towards us.

Colquhoun gripped my arm. "Do you see that?" he said, pointing to the ripple. "That was a big ship that sank—that's its wash!" The *Haimun* heeled ever so slightly to the wash caused by the sinking *Petropavlosk*.

The gallant Makaroff went down with this ship, and with him the Russian naval hopes in those far-off seas.

It was obvious to us that the remainder of the Russian Fleet had made good their escape. Togo, however, with his magnificent battle fleet in line ahead, and with his battle flags flying, was standing in. Precisely at 9 a.m. the first battery from the Port Arthur forts opened fire. I could not resist this opportunity, and I sent a brief message to this effect, by my wireless, to Wei-hai-wei. This, I presume, in the history of journalism, was the first time that a message had been sent direct from the field of war activity to a newspaper office, within one minute of the action opening. Alas, in our case it was the last time, and one may presume, that the opportunity will never be allowed again.

We were ten miles off Port Arthur when the action opened, and the links were complete to *The Times* office, in Printing House Square,

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on the opposite side of the Globe. Gainsay it who may, it was a journalistic achievement, and a good delivery.

The events of April 13th must be considered as the climax of the real efficiency of the *Haimun*. As events proved it was, probably, the most successful day of my whole journalistic career. If only Admiral Makaroff had hardened his heart and had not been scared back to his bolt-hole in Port Arthur, we should have been present at a fleet action, and the Admiral might have been alive to-day, even he might have been victorious and changed the whole history of the world. Anyway he did not harden his heart, and there was no fleet action, but a very interesting naval engagement, and one which was very far reaching in its results.

I know that Admiral Togo came to the conclusion that he had sufficiently crippled the Russian Fleet, to preclude any chance of a serious sortie in the near future. Corollary to this, I suspect, that he considered that the utility of our *Haimun*, to his purposes, had shrunk into insignificance, and that these advantages no longer balanced the disadvantages of having in the war area a steamer that turned up when his ships were operating. I judge this from subsequent restrictions that were placed upon our movements which will be referred to in the proper sequence of the narrative.

After the long range exchange of shots, Togo drew off his fleet and sailed south-east. It was obvious that the Japanese were sailing a false course, so we let them get well under the

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horizon and then set our own course back to Pillar Rock.

I had got a fine message off, and I turned in that night, sincerely hoping that there would be nothing to disturb us until morning.

My hopes were justified. We rounded Pillar Rock at 6 a.m. on the following morning, and were at our anchorage at Chinampo by ten o'clock. We were boarded at once by the picket boat from the *Fuso*, and Tonami and I went at once to tell our news to the Admiral, who was delighted with the details that we could give him, but regretted, with us, that the expected fleet action had not materialized.

That evening, as we lay at anchor, Brown caught and transmitted a Russian wireless message, which we sent across to the *Fuso*. Hosoya's staff were able to decipher it. It reported the sinking of the *Petropavlosk*, and the death thereby of Admiral Makaroff. Of course we knew that a battleship had been sunk, but this was the first intimation that the Russian Admiralissimo had gone down with it. The *Fuso* moved that evening to the outer anchorage about five miles down stream.

On March 16th the *Haimun* dropped down to the same anchorage, and the Admiral signalled her to lie up close, as he would soon have some information for us. We stayed with the flagship until the following day and spent most of our time with the cheery little Admiral, who gave me a beautiful red Manchurian fox-skin as a memento of the pleasant hours we had spent together.

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The question of coal was now becoming urgent with us. It will be remembered that when we were at Nagasaki we took 600 tons. This was more than our bunker accommodation, and we had to fill it into cargo space. That was seven weeks ago, and we had done a wonderful amount of cruising in the time. The ship was beginning to feel the want of ballast.

I gathered, however, from my confidential conversations with the Admiral, that for some time to come, unless the unexpected happened and the Russian Fleet came out in determined sortie, there would not be much interest at sea, beyond the blockade of Port Arthur. Kuroki with his First Army was not getting on as well as had been hoped, on account of the transport difficulties, owing to the atrocious state of the communications due to the spring thaw. In the Admiral's opinion there would be ample time for us to run over to Wei-hai-wei, and then down to Nagasaki to coal and to get back to the mouth of the Yalu, before Kuroki seriously attempted the passage of that river.

The Admiral gave Tonami charts of the Yalu estuary, and a commission to buy for him and his ship a supply of stores, and told me to report back to him in the neighbourhood of the Yalu Inlet not later than April 24th.

Unfortunately these were plans that were never to materialize.

Having said good-bye to my good friends on the *Fuso* we weighed anchor at 3.15 p.m. At 6 p.m. we got Athern, and for an hour Brown was taking in a stream of cables that Wei-hai-

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wei had waiting for us. None of these were cheerful reading. There were five of the same purport. They came severally from *The Times*,[1] London; the Commissioner, Wei-hai-wei; the British Minister, in Tokio; the British Minister in Pekin; and Captain Brinkley, Tokio; and contained the information that the Russian Government had notified all neutral Governments that they would not permit neutral vessels carrying Correspondents and wireless telegraphy to cruise in the vicinity of Port Arthur, and they would treat all such Correspondents as spies, and their vessels as prizes of war. The actual text of this note, of which I received such a sheaf of paraphrase, was as follows:

"Le lieutenant de Sa Majesté l'Empereur en Extreme-Orient vient de faire la declaration suivante: 'Dans le cas ou des bâtiments neutres en vue des côtes de la presqu'île de Kwantoun ou dans la sphere d'action des forces navales russes, seraient retenus, ayant à leur bord des correspondants des journaux, communiquant à l'ennemi des renseignements au moyen d'appareils perfectionnés non prévus encore par les conventions, ces correspondants seraient considérés comme espions, et les navires portant ces appareils capturés et retenus comme prises de guerre.'"

[1] To James, Wei-hai-wei, Russia officially notified Western Powers treat Forest operator correspondent as spies seize ship apparatus stop avoid waters country Russian occupation delay chartering.—*Times* (in cypher).

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As the *Haimun* was the only ship thus equipped, and as I was the only Correspondent now on board her, there was no doubt as to whom was the target of this offensive missile. The date upon which the *démarche* was made showed that Admiral Makaroff had come to his decision immediately after our little *rencontre* with the *Bayan*. His threat had disturbed those interested in me and my ship not a little. In fact, I had not realized that I was such a conspicuous figure.

But between the date of the publication of the warning and the date upon which it reached me much had happened to modify the effectiveness of the threat. Gallant Makaroff had gone to join his fathers, and the possibility of the Russian naval forces effecting our capture had been reduced with the fighting efficiency of their fleet. I suppose of all those concerned with the transcription of this threat, the unfortunate person at whose head it was hurled was the least perturbed. But then I had the advantage of Admiral Hosoya's appreciation of the present naval situation. Of the five warnings I received that from Moberly Bell was the least emphatic.

A message also came through for me from Dr. Morrison, *The Times* correspondent at Pekin, to say that he was leaving Tientsin in a steamer for Shanghai and would touch at Wei-hai-wei.

We dropped anchor in Wei-hai-wei at 8 a.m. on April 18th. Our cruise had lasted ten days, and, as has been shown, was an adventurous one both for ourselves and *The Times*. We

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were, as a matter of fact, down to our last biscuit and loaf of bread when we anchored.

I was surprised at the relief which our return gave to our friends in Wei-hai-wei. Athern was a model operator, and he gave no item of information away. Many, therefore, believed that we had been "done in" by the Russians, and that the latter had acted first and notified the neutral Governments afterwards.

That evening Dr. Morrison and Major Beddoes arrived from Tientsin and came on board the *Haimun*. I had given orders that we would clear for Nagasaki at daybreak on the following morning.

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CHAPTER XXI

FALL OF THE GUILLOTINE

I HAVE already referred to the picturesque charms of Nagasaki. As the *Haimun* steamed up the beautiful lagoon, at the base of which the port lies, the view, in the bursting spring foliage was entrancing. We made our buoy about nine o'clock on the morning of April 21st, and the barges with our consignment of coal were already waiting for us. They were alongside almost before we had made fast. In those days coaling at Nagasaki was done for the most part by female labour, and it was a remarkable sight to see these stocky little women in their scores, toiling small baskets of coal up the gangway and trotting gaily down the reverse.

Captain Passmore had informed me that the Chief Engineer had a minor repair to do to his engines, and that he would require the fires to be drawn for twenty-four hours. We were only just tied up, when the Engineer opened his steam valves.

Somehow the rustling escape of the steam sent a cold shiver down my back. In these exciting times it seemed that I was sacrificing my power. It was perhaps a premonition of the disappointments and troubles that were in front of me. I could not get it out of my head that the shrill

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evaporation was the knell to my activities on the high seas. Nor was I very wrong, as the subsequent narrative will show.

No news travels like bad news. We had not been in port an hour before I was snowed under with messages. The first intimation came from Tonami, who returned from a visit to the Japanese man-of-war in port with surprising rapidity. He had found a telegram awaiting him there which read as follows: "Military General Staff requests *Haimun* will not go north of line Chemulpo–Chifu until further notice." This was followed by a telegram from Brinkley to the same purport, and before I had digested this, a boat brought a letter from the British Consul at Nagasaki with similar information.

A glance at the map will show how futile the licence remaining to me was from the point of view of my News Service. I took the messages and shut myself up in my cabin to ponder over the significance of this unexpected restriction. Instinctively I knew what it meant. It was as clear as daylight to me that I had fallen between two stools. The Naval authorities on the one hand, the Military General Staff on the other. What the Japanese had given me with their right hand they were now taking away with their left. I had served their purpose—at the risk of my neck—with the one; I could be of no use, only a possible hindrance, to the other. The prohibition meant that the Japanese were about to land their Armies on the mainland to isolate the Liautang Peninsula.

Naturally I had no grounds for complaint. If the Japanese military authorities considered me a

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danger to their military operations, the issues they had at stake must be superior to the convenience of a foreign journalist. What galled me was that I had so far " played the game " with their interests, with my machinery, that I had rather denied *The Times* news than ask Tonami to pass anything that I thought might possibly be prejudicial to their future operations. In fact, on more than one occasion Tonami had remarked, when we compared my telegrams with the official Naval Reports, that I was more careful in this respect even than Admiral Togo himself.

I hoped, however, to get over the difficulty which had arisen by a diplomatic appeal to the Japanese authorities.

As it seemed to me that I and *The Times'* unfortunate ship had become a bone of contention between the Japanese Naval and Military Staffs, I decided to send Tonami to Tokio, so that he could gauge for me the real seat of the trouble, and with the assistance of any high friends in the Naval Department worry out a remedy. He thought that he would be able to do so, and at any rate he could refute, from his personal knowledge, those suggestions of bad faith which were entirely groundless.

It would be wearying to give in full the budget of correspondence that passed between me and my agents and the various officials concerned over this military prohibition. This is not a Blue Book, but the narrative of the ups and downs in a very absorbing adventure.

It savours of triteness to say that in the East the estimate of time is elastic in any period it may

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be deemed to embrace. In Japan it is especially so, since if you chance to ask a Japanese to dine with you, say at 8 p.m., you are quite likely to find him on your doorstep at daybreak of the appointed date.

Tonami's two days in Tokio developed into ten. Ten precious days off the utility of the *Haimun*, and when he did return, he held out no immediate prospect of our release. He confirmed, however, my suspicions with regard to the cause of our trouble, and he brought a message from Admiral Saito, that if I would possess my soul in patience, until there was a loosening of the strangle-hold by the military dictators, he would then, when I got back to Wei-hai-wei, probably, be able to help me. He also sent me a message that the Russians as yet showed no sign of preparing another sortie, and that I was therefore not missing a fleet action, which he knew to be my main naval hope.

I was by this beginning to be more resigned, since all I could get out of Moberly Bell was a repeated injunction not to disobey Japanese authority, and a magnanimous declaration made by the Russians, in reply to some diplomatic protest, I presume, that although they would hold me and my ship as a prisoner and prize of war, they would not prefer the extreme penalty for espionage against me.

Upon Admiral Saito's information privately conveyed to me I determined to return to my base in the Yellow Sea. We had fair weather for our run to Wei-hai-wei, though the glass was falling. We got Athern at 195 miles. As I had reason to anticipate that there were matters of

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naval interest on foot we steered through the night a wide course, and "took a compass," as the Biblical expression had it, that would take us into our old hunting grounds. It was a night of tragedy. A tragedy for the Japanese Navy, as they lost the *Hatsuse* and later, in the night, the *Yashima* battleships, upon a Russian mine-field. A tragedy for me as a journalist, as the knowledge of these naval losses could not be repeated to *The Times*, and had to be forgotten by myself, as if they had not happened.[1]

There is nothing, I suppose, more difficult in the career of a responsible journalist than when he is in possession of important news that it is imperative to him to suppress. He may have been given valuable information under the seal of secrecy, or, as in this case, he may be forced to obliterate from his mind, information that in its promulgation would damage the interests of those to whom he is bound by a common interest or some such tie. The loss of these two capital ships in one night had changed the complexion of the naval operations. The Russians, now that their naval repository work was well advanced, had a battle-fleet in Port Arthur, if they only knew it,

[1] The *Hatsuse* sank in thirty fathoms of water, but the *Yashima* was towed in a sinking condition towards her base. It was impossible to bring her into a secure position, and she sank somewhere near the Elliot Group. Owing to the splendid secrecy which the Japanese were able to maintain the loss of the *Hatsuse* even was not known for some time, and the fiction that the *Yashima* was still afloat was maintained until the end of the war. Promotions to and casualties in the last-named vessel were systematically published for months after she was at the bottom of the Yellow Sea.

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that was slightly superior to that commanded by Admiral Togo. It was just possible that their information might find knowledge of the loss of the *Hatsuse*, but there were no immediate means by which they could learn the fate of the *Yashima*. In the matter of cold calculation, the existence or non-existence of this one unit alone might turn the scale in the Russian appreciation of the naval situation.

In view of this unexpected reduction in their fighting power, the Japanese, now committed to extensive landing operations upon the Manchurian coast line, did not wish, for the moment, to provoke the chances of a fleet action. Such an action now would be a gamble, with the whole issue of their land operations at stake.

If only the Russian Fleet could be kept in Port Arthur, they had other plans by which they hoped to render it innocuous. I knew that Tonami had several communications from Tokio, upon the subject of keeping this, Japan's, vital naval secret. He was able to assure the authorities that it was in good hands.

The *Haimun* was back again in Wei-hai-wei on May 17th. Athern was glad to have us back, as the time during our forced absence had begun to hang heavily upon him. He had, however, spent his leisure in a study of the various wireless signals that reached our station. There were the countless communications from the Japanese war-ships, and as the British men-of-war, the *Andromeda* and *Fearless*, were now at Wei-hai-wei, and the *Leviathan* was somewhere close, the wireless of these ships had entered the distracting field. An

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Italian man-of-war that had been at Chemulpo was now at Chifu. Its wireless also was an element of chaos in message-sending in the area, especially as it made a fetish of calling us up.

As our operators were able to distinguish between the various systems in use, it was interesting to learn that the Russian installation at Port Arthur was singularly silent. This we read to mean that the units of the Russian Fleet sheltering there were not tempting fortune very much in the open sea.

As the extension of the limits placed upon the *Haimun* were not really of much value to me, and as I was most concerned in my inability to carry out my arrangements for the collection of Fraser's dispatches, I was still pegging away at the Japanese authorities for more liberty. But I realized that the loss of the two capital ships must cause the Japanese military authorities to harden their hearts, since their three landing bases were, as I have already pointed out, somewhat in jeopardy, if the Russians should, under cover of a fleet action, attack either or all of them with their subsidiary squadrons.

As the "temporary" prohibition had now reached its fourteenth day, I became more than restless, and the cables between me and Brinkley were kept very busy. I thought that as the Japanese naval authorities now knew that I had not divulged the vital news of the sinking of their battleships, that they might be able to induce the chiefs of their sister service to place more faith in my integrity and good intentions. But it was not to be. I had several messages

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from Brinkley counselling patience. But patience at about £100 a day of somebody else's money is a wearying process.

Port Arthur had now been definitely isolated by the Japanese Army that had landed. We came back to Wei-hai-wei under stress of very bad weather, but with a much greater elevation of spirits than we had had for the past six weeks. I had real live news for *The Times*, which was augmented two days later by another stroke of luck. An Englishman called Soper, who was in business at Dalny, ran the blockade, in a small sailing cutter. Soper unfortunately was washed overboard, but there were three other refugees, and from one I secured a very graphic description of the land operations that had sealed the fate of Port Arthur when the Japanese defeated General Stoessel at Nan-shan. There was also a telegram awaiting me from Brinkley, to say that Colquhoun's joining the Japanese Fleet was approved and would I get him to Chemulpo at the earliest date possible.

I decided to send Colquhoun across at once. I myself remained at Wei-hai-wei, and took up my residence at the Club. The *Haimun* left with Colquhoun that same afternoon. As our ship was leaving the harbour a China merchant vessel came in. I mention this as the arrival of this boat is directly connected with my narrative.

That evening, when I had dined at the Club, and was just settling down to have a real hard night of it at my ledgers—the chartering of a biggish steamer brings many financial responsibilities in its wake—when the Chinese boy said

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there was a gentleman to see me. I expected that it was one of my naval friends from the men-of-war in the roadstead. Judge of my surprise when a tall man, obviously a foreigner, strode into my room, presented me with his card, and shook me by the hand.

I asked him to take a chair, and glanced at the card. The legend ran "Baron Lubavin," and gave an address in Shanghai.

My visitor opened the conversation in perfect English.

"I have come up from Shanghai in the boat that arrived this evening on purpose to see you. It is a matter of importance. I might say vital importance!"

As he paused, I bowed my acknowledgment.

"I will be perfectly frank with you," he continued. "I am a Russian Agent. I am employed in their Special Intelligence Service in China. Our garrison at Port Arthur, as you know, is isolated. We have no means of communicating with them, until General Kuropatkin has defeated the Japanese Army of Occupation. You have a wireless installation here. I have this short message in cypher for Port Arthur. (He took a piece of paper out of his pocket upon which was inscribed a figure cypher. It did not look to contain more than 600 or 800 groups.) If you will dispatch it for me, I am authorized to give you these!"

On saying this he took out of another pocket a great wad of bank-notes, which he put upon my table. I looked at the pile in astonishment. It was of an amazing thickness.

Baron Lubavin nodded his head.

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"It is such a little message," he said, "and these notes represent twenty thousand pounds sterling. You see, it is a very vital message. Will you take these notes? They are yours."

I was hypnotized by the sight of so much money: and I was so flabbergasted by the proposal that it took me quite a little time to catch hold of myself. When I could bring myself to speak, I said:

"Baron, you have made a mistake. You are trying to buy *The Times*. *The Times* is not to be bought!"

I stood up as an intimation that our interview was over. The Russian also stood up. He smiled as he answered suavely, almost wheedlingly: "You are mistaken. I am not asking any opinion of *The Times* in return for payment. All I require is a few minutes' access to your wireless machinery. It is nothing to do with *The Times*; it is just a little matter between us two."

He picked up the notes from off the table and held them out to me.

"Baron," I said with some asperity, "it is the same thing. For the moment I am *The Times*. *The Times* is not to be bought. I bid you good evening!"

The Russian stood looking at me for a short space. Then he said:

"The message is so vital I will increase the amount of the reward!"

"Baron," I answered, "I will ask you kindly to leave me. I am not in the position to do business with you."[1]

[1] This is practically verbatim. I made a note of it in my diary on the following day.

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I showed him to the door. He made one more remonstrance as we reached the courtyard, and I then got rid of him.

There could be no question of my accounts that night. A man with such a huge amount of money was a danger to me. I had no reason to suspect my honest operator Athern. But £20,000 is a sum of money that might easily weigh any scale of integrity. I put on my hat and coat and slipped my Colt automatic into my pocket. My place that night was at my wireless station on the top of the hill.

It was not an unpleasant climb up to the wireless station. It was summer now, and the nights were delicious. I suppose it was about eleven o'clock when I reached the hutments we had built at the foot of our aerial. There was a light in the operator's room. I looked through the window. Athern was there asleep on his bed, with the receiver-cap over his ears. The *Haimun* was at sea, and he had so schooled himself, that he could sleep through all the various scratchings on his telephone except the particular one that came from the *Haimun*. There was no need to awaken him, so I took up a post of vantage on the only road that led up to the station, and prepared for an all-night vigil.

In about half an hour I heard footsteps approaching. I had been wise in my generation. In five minutes I saw two figures separating from the night shadows.

"Halt," I said. "You cannot come any nearer to the station, Baron. I am armed!"

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"Have you reconsidered my proposal, Captain? It is only such a tiny message!"

"There is nothing to reconsider, Baron, and I must ask you not to trespass on my station!"

The two men turned and went down the zigzag path. I do not know who the second man may have been.

I kept solitary vigil on that hill-top until the sun rose in magnificent splendour away in the East, way back from over Pekin somewhere. Have you ever done sentry for a live-long night? It is a painful experience, even if you have, as I had, plenty to think about.

The China merchant left early on the following morning for Chifu and Tientsin. Baron Lubavin, if that was his real name, left with it. Athern, the operator, never knew that I had stood sentry outside the wireless station throughout those dreary hours that he was sleeping so peacefully.[1]

[1] There was a possible sequel to this incident, which is so curious that I am compelled to give it as a note. It will be remembered that I have remarked during the narrative upon the persistency with which we had been called up by the wireless upon an Italian warship in these waters. There had also been established in Shan-hai-kwan, since the Boxer troubles, a Wireless Station which communicated with Pekin. Both these stations were in the control of the Italians. Several years after the Russo-Japanese War a friend of mine was travelling in Italy. He met there a well-to-do young Italian who was making a splash in the high-speed Motor Car world. During the period of their intimacy my friend was asked if he knew me. The young Italian then explained that he had been in the Italian Navy and during the Japanese War had been in the Far East, where as a wireless officer he had had a lot of intercommunication with my ship the *Haimun*. During the war, however, he had unexpectedly come into a fortune

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This event made a very deep impression upon me. Hitherto this possible danger to my *bona fides* with the Japanese had not presented itself in my calculations. I had not the smallest reason to suspect the integrity of my operator, but then it had never entered into my philosophy that such big money might be introduced into the scales. Human nature, with its attendant weaknesses, has been, and will be, the same for all time. I was much perturbed, and I must say that after this incident I looked upon the attitude of the Japanese military authorities with much less bitterness of heart. As Moberly Bell had truly said in one of his letters to me, Japan had infinitely more at stake than my reputation and *The Times'* money.

After I had satisfied myself that my Baron had betaken himself off in the coasting steamer, I returned to the Club and had a good sleep. Late in the afternoon I wandered up to the wireless station, and had a chat with Athern. He had been in communication with the *Haimun*, in the Chemulpo Inlet, at well over 200 miles. Athern then casually made what to me was an interesting disclosure.

"Someone has opened up communication again with Port Arthur. It was quite close. Not further than Chifu, I should say. It was in ordinary Morse, Marconi system I should say. The message

and had retired from the Italian Navy. It seemed such a coincidence that I have often wondered whether that unexpected fortune was the one which lay for some minutes on my desk in the Naval Club at Wei-hai-wei in the same room where Admiral Ting committed suicide!

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was a figure cypher. I took down the first few groups."

He handed me the slip upon which he had inscribed about twenty groups of figures. Chifu is only three hours steaming from Wei-hai-wei. I kept my own council. I was certain of one thing, however, which was that Athern knew nothing about my Russian friend of the previous evening. I strongly suspected from this evidence, nevertheless, that the Baron's "vital" message had found its way to its destination in beleaguered Port Arthur.

Having warned Athern to keep watch for messages from the *Haimun*, I started on my way down the hill again. It was already almost dark. I passed Athern's Chinese cook toiling up with his market produce, and then I was waylaid by a European whom I had seen several times hanging about the hotel. He was one of those mysterious individuals who, in those days, were not uncommon in these parts and were to be found loitering in most of China's Treaty Ports. "Human jackals" is the most apt phrase by which they may be described. They lived by any nefarious adventure to which they could turn their hands.

This specious speculator had a proposition to make. He was, he said, preparing to run the blockade into Port Arthur with a fleet of Chinese junks, laded with foodstuffs of which he seemed to think the garrison were short. The season of thick weather was approaching. He would have everything ready, and get the junks to sea, on the first favourable thick night. Would I give his fleet a tow with the *Haimun* for 80 miles? It

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would be worth a thousand pounds to me if I would.

It jumped to my mind, when I heard this proposition, that I had mistaken my vocation. That I should not have undertaken the duties of a responsible Correspondent to a great journal, but should have established myself as a filibuster on the shores of the Yellow Sea. My reply to my "jackal" friend was curt and incisive, and he seemed not only crestfallen, but genuinely surprised at my refusal. Such is the deterioration that besets the European in the Far East. It certainly had been a full twenty-four hours for me since the *Haimun* had left.

A coaster going south brought Morrison again on passage to Shanghai. The steamer only stayed a short time, but I had the opportunity of having a good consultation with my wise colleague. He advised me to lock up the affair of the Russian Baron in my heart, as knowledge of it would probably add another bolt and bar to the door which the Japanese had closed against me. His eyes twinkled when we said good-bye as he remarked: "It was a nice fat sum; £1,000 a year for life. I wonder if the notes were good. There are a lot of spurious bank notes on the coast!"

Morrison promised to be back at Wei-hai-wei in a few days.

The following morning I got a long message from Colquhoun on the *Haimun*, from which I was able to make a very useful dispatch to *The Times*. But it also conveyed the dispiriting information that the authorities were procrastin-

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ating again about Colquhoun's attachment to the Fleet.

The *Haimun* came in early on the morning of May 30th. Tonami was on board, but Colquhoun had remained behind at Chemulpo. I took the ship out for a two days' cruise within my limits, but although we went up the gulf of Liau-tung we drew blank, and I returned to Wei-hai-wei on June 2nd. The various telegrams that passed between me and Tokio showed no indication that the promised relief from the embargo was imminent. This, added to the doubts which had come to me, as detailed earlier in the chapter, decided me to cable to Hong-Kong in view of a surrender of the charter. It was with a heavy heart that I did this, but it seemed to me that it would be a useless waste of money to continue our present state of suspended action.

Having cleared from Chifu we sailed for Wei-hai-wei. We ran in at 7.15, and just stayed long enough to give Athern his final instructions and collect any messages that might be awaiting us. At 8 p.m. we steamed out of the harbour, and I looked upon the scene of my activities, as such, for the last time.

On the following day I sent across the Shantung Promontory the last wireless message that I was to send to *The Times* from the *Haimun* at sea.

We had delightful weather as we ran south, but, intuitively, I felt that the utility of the ship and its wireless installation as a journalistic adjunct had run its course. I had succeeded, and in success I had failed. I had won, and in winning I had lost. To a certain extent a feeling of

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resignation took hold of me as Morrison and I walked the decks of the *Haimun* in that pleasant summer weather. Possibly I was tired. Usually it is a sufficient employment for one man to be a Special Correspondent in a war area. Added to these duties, I had had the worry and responsibilities of a ship-owner. After the excitements and the constant labours came a certain reaction. I felt it in the inactivity of that voyage back to Japan.

On June 8th at dusk we made Rukurran Island at the mouth of the Inland Sea. We were not able to get a pilot till the following morning, so we did not reach Kobe until June 10th. We left the *Haimun* [1] at Kobe and went on to Tokio by train.

[1] I only once saw the *Haimun* again. When I was returning to England by P. & O. steamer after the Battle of Li-au-yang late in September, the *Haimun* came into Hong-Kong and tied up at the dock beside us.

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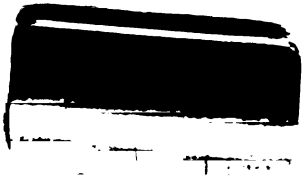
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